

Bankrupt – Chapter 1

Sharon and I got a letter from Wells Fargo. They said our bank account was over drawn. I went online and checked the account. Someone had stolen our credit card number and our identity and cleaned out our bank account just after my Social Security and Iowa pensions had hit. I'd never heard of any of the places where the Bank ATM VISA card had been used and asked Sharon. She hadn't heard of any either.

The bank checked all of the places where the VISA card had been used and said the charges stood. We not only owed them for the checks Sharon had written, but about \$300 in bank charges. We had been victims of that break in at the Tucson, Arizona credit card processing center. We weren't just broke – we were shattered. Like a light bulb someone had thrown on concrete. I called Matt to see how much money would be in the account on the 4th. None. I explained the problem and he said he'd take it up with the board the next time they met.

Sharon called the utility companies and explained the problem. We were a little behind already and they said tough. There would be an extra charge for the bounced checks. Edison said that they would require a \$1,300 deposit before they turned the lights back on, assuming they had to turn them off. Matt called to say, well let's make it easy, tough. One by one the utilities went off. Our oil lamps provided light and we were cooking with the camp stove. The mortgage holder foreclosed on the house. I slowly began to run out of my meds and the gas tank was empty on the car.

"Let them have the house, I'm tired of fighting every creditor we have," I suggested.

"Amy said we could move our stuff into her storage unit," Sharon replied.

"Do it. Offer to pay David's boys and then renege. They charged Amy \$60 to move the old washing machine 25'. Tell them you'll owe them. Borrow enough money from Lorrie to buy a tank of gas while you're at it."

"What are we going to do?"

"Run and hide. What else is there left to do? I'll use Lorrie's phone to call Matt and we'll set it up for all of our Social Security and pension money to go into the Iowa account. We'll ignore the Wells Fargo account because we can't close it until we cover those checks."

"We can't hide, they'll find us," Sharon suggested.

"We're going to change our names and have all of the papers to back it up," I explained. "We'll steal the identity of a dead couple who were killed in a car accident or something. Then we'll work backwards and get birth certificates. After that, we'll get drivers' licenses and Passports'. I'll try and find someone named Lazarus whose identity we can borrow."

“Why Lazarus?”

“The irony,” I explained.

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We stored our stuff and told Amy if anyone asked, it was all hers. We stayed with Lorrie and David until we had money in the Iowa account. Using their computer, I did a search of death records and we were now Mr. and Mrs. John R. and Mary C. Lazarus. We opened a mail drop at a postal place and set it up as an apartment number. With a permanent address we got birth certificates and then drivers' licenses and went to LA and got Passports. It hadn't been easy, but it hadn't been all that hard.

We had money, now that we didn't need it. I went to Dr. J and explained that we'd changed our names and we needed prescriptions in our new names. He obliged. He told me that all of the lab tests and the exams were back and I needed surgery or I was going to die. I told him that I was going to die anyway. There is an advantage in being a fatalist. I explained that to use my Medicare card, I'd have to reveal my real identity. I wasn't going to do that anytime soon.

When all of the new identity cards arrived, I went to Sandy's and bought a Ruger Vaquero revolver and a Winchester rifle, both in .45 Colt. I went to Big 5 and bought a Mossberg 590A1 shotgun. We didn't have any bills these days and the money went a long ways. Sharon wanted to know what I was going to do next. I told her to pick up the prescriptions and not worry about it because I had a plan.

We swapped our worn out car to a guy for an equally worn out Chevy pickup. I got Chris to swap the engine for a rebuilt 350 engine. I had the manual transmission rebuilt and Chris went through the vehicle replacing every worn out part. It was good as new. I got a cheap paint job and it looked pretty good, for a 45-year-old pickup.

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Lorrie said we were going to need to move on, but it was ok, I was ready. I left Sharon at Amy's and I took the pickup to Arizona looking for an abandoned homestead somewhere in the mountains. I finally found one and with a little work, it could be made livable. It didn't have electricity, a well or any appliances. The roof probably leaked, but I could fix that. Sharon, oops Mary, had bought a new prepaid cell phone in her new name from Cingular Wireless. The following month, I bought hand tools and we loaded some folding chairs, the TV trays and our mattresses and box springs into the pickup and headed to Arizona. I told everyone we were going to Flippin, Arkansas.

You know me right? I'm bankrupt both financially and morally. The bank screwed us and we'd lost almost everything. Anything that wasn't paid for we left in the house, except for the computers and when we got money, we paid off the balance with a money order.

John and Mary Lazarus was a newly married couple when they were killed in an auto accident and they didn't have any living family, I checked. I'm really good at researching the Internet. I opened a post office box apartment in Phoenix, Arizona after I found the homestead and I put in an address forwarding card(s). We went to LA and had our Passports switched too. When we arrived in Arizona, we got Arizona driver's licenses using our apartment address. We no longer existed. I ordered new checks from the Iowa bank using our new box address. We of course had our old ID's to use when we had to. We opened a Wells Fargo checking account in Phoenix using our new ID's and Matt agreed to work out a direct deposit with most of my Trust Fund money, allowing us to switch money from Iowa to Wells Fargo.

My little plan was by no means foolproof, but it was working, so far. Mary was very unhappy with me when she saw our new home. I had several rolls of tarpaper and I pulled the galvanized roofing off and put down 2 new layers of tarpaper and replaced the galvanized roofing. It was a start. It was hard, I'm afraid of heights. Then, I got a roll of screening and screened the windows and that helped a little more. I gathered up logs and tossed them in the pickup. They came back to the house and I sawed them to length for the fireplace using my new chainsaw. It was summer so we wouldn't need the wood until winter.

I made a trip back to Palmdale and got Mary's stove and sewing machines from Amy's storage. I went to a meeting and Ron wanted to know where in Hell we'd disappeared to. I told him we'd moved to Flippin, Arkansas. I got jets to convert the stove to LP. I brought the automatic washer, even though we didn't have electricity. I had all that I could haul, for this trip. We needed electricity, badly. Solar power seemed to be the answer because an LP fueled generator was simply out of reach because it burned too much fuel and required too much maintenance. However, there was enough money to buy 4 solar panels, 4 200-amp hour batteries and a large 10k inverter.

The panels were 48-volt panels and it took 4 batteries in series to make up one battery circuit. She could power the sewing machines, but not the automatic washer. We needed more electricity, a well and a water tower plus something to heat the water before she could use the washer. When we had money again, I bought the electric water heater and hired a well drilled. I also bought a 6.5kw gasoline powered generator. We could heat the water and then turn off the water heater and power the washer. I put up clotheslines. The next time we had money, I bought 8 more of the solar panels and 8 more batteries. In the in between times, I gathered wood for the fireplace and cut it to length. I was getting one hell of a pile of firewood.

With fall approaching, I got the glass in the windows replaced. We hadn't needed closed windows before. We were living on beans, rice and venison, shot out of season. I don't even like venison! Mary wanted to take the next money and stock up on food at the Mesa-Superstition Springs Costco. We did and bought a small freezer while we were at it to store frozen food.

It was a good month and we bought a fairly large freezer, 8 more solar panels and 8 more batteries. 20 batteries equaled 4,000-amp hours. I did some figuring and bought 20 more batteries, giving us 8,000-amp hours of storage. I bought a water tank and used a lever arrangement to get it on the 20' tower I'd found time to build. I had enclosed the tower to make a well house. I was so dang tired, I was ready to lie down and die, like the doctor said I was going to. I should be so lucky; he had exaggerated a little to force me to have the surgery. Dang.

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One final large check came in and I bought 8 more solar panels and another 20 batteries. We now had fulltime electricity, for the well pump and the appliances – the house wasn't fully wired. I had run circuits for the automatic washer, her sewing machines and the freezer. I had enough romex to put in additional outlets and a florescent light in each room. It was going to be my winter project. I had used 12-gauge wire on the outlet circuits and planned to use 14-gauge wire on the lighting circuits, just in case. I also used 20-amp duplex outlets.

We had 12k amp-hours of electrical storage, a 10k inverter and 28 solar panels. Over the course of the winter, the clothes were dried on clotheslines I strung around the cabin. It snowed just enough to close the fire road and we didn't go anywhere until the snow melted in March. The Chevy pickup wasn't 4WD. We were back to a normal diet too, thanks to the trip to Costco. The prescriptions had been written for a 3-month supply with 3 refills. I somehow managed to lose them and ended up with duplicates, one set filled at Wal-Mart and the other at Walgreen's. Well, if you figured you might get snowed in for a few months at a time, it made sense. The cabin wasn't fancy and it wasn't insulated. But, I chinked the logs with fresh cement so we didn't get much air leakage. Hell this was better than anything I'd ever written about in any of my stories.

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Spring (2006) came the same as always. We restocked our food from Costco, first. We made a trip to California, said hey to the kids and brought back a pickup and U Haul trailer load of our oak furniture from Amy's storage. We had only burned about ½ of the firewood I'd gathered and I had all summer to get more. We refilled the prescriptions and I saw doctor J and told him we needed new ones. He was frankly surprised I wasn't dead. I told him I was too mean to die. I told him to write 2 sets of prescriptions, in case I lost one. He did and I put one in my wallet and Sharon put the other in her purse, for the sake of the illusion. He wrote these prescriptions for 6 months supplies with a single refill.

We went to different pharmacies and filled the prescriptions in Phoenix. I bought 12 more solar panels, 40 more batteries, another inverter, a Vaquerio revolver and a 2-gun Mexican fast draw rig. We were looking good and still had a little money in the Iowa account. I renewed my Gary D. Ott Passport and Sharon applied for one in her real name. I bought a rototiller and made a garden space for Sharon. Then, I installed the solar

panels, batteries, and inverter and started to gather deadfalls for firewood. I didn't take the time it cut it up, then. Instead, I built a pole barn and we bought 2 Morgan horses and enough hay and feed to last a year.

Sharon wanted a rifle and a scabbard for her horse; for rattlesnakes, she said. I got her a Vaquero and a Winchester rifle in .45 Colt. I even got her a fast draw rig for a single revolver had extra-long gun belt holding a lot of cartridges. We were using bottle gas to power the stove. I had several of the bottles, enough for about 1 year and they were all on the back porch lined up like a row of soldiers. When the firewood was cut, I built a lean-to garage onto the house that was open on one end and backed in my Chevy.

Most stuff was built of exterior grade plywood and nothing was insulated, not even the house, remember. Firewood was cheap, insulation cost money. We could watch TV once I put up an antenna. Reception wasn't very good, but it was TV. In the late summer, after we'd finished harvesting the garden and knew what we needed, we went to Mesa and stocked up at Costco. We refilled what prescriptions we could. There was enough money for me to buy a TS-2000 Kenwood radio and an antenna. I had cut down a pine and had a long pole to use for the antennas. I bought 20 more batteries, too. There was money left over in both bank accounts, even after all that.

I bought Sharon a LP fueled clothes dryer. No more lines to avoid. I gave Ronald McDonald a call on Sharon's recharged cell phone.

"We went to Flippin, Arkansas looking for you, Gar-Bear. Nobody in Flippin ever heard of you. What gives?"

"We must not be in Flippin, Ron did you look in Little Rock?"

"Yep, you weren't there either."

"We're in Arizona, living under assumed names."

"Figures. Where, Holbrook?"

"About ½ way between Phoenix and Sedona. We have a mailing address in Phoenix under our assumed names at one of those mailing places. We're very close to the Prescott National Forest, but not in it. The closest town is named Mayer."

"Arizona? How many assault rifles, suppressors and machine guns have you bought?"

"None."

"That doesn't sound like the Gar-Bear I know."

"Exactly. I'm not dead either, contrary to what you might hear."

“How big is your bomb shelter?”

“I haven’t dug one, yet. That’s next year, I hope. It will be a storm shelter, nothing more.”

“Hell, I figured you’d have put in a big bunker. I saw the show on Saddam’s bunker, pretty fancy. I’m glad you called. Linda’s dad died and we’re moving to Cedar Hill. I’ll give you Robert’s number and you can call him to get our unlisted phone number, when we get one.”

“Did you write down our number from your caller ID?”

“Nope. It’s a cell phone, right?”

“Right and we don’t turn it on very often. It’s mainly for emergencies. I’ll give you the number, just in case, but as far as you know, we’re dead or disappeared, right?”

“Ok, but does that mean we can’t visit you in wherever you are, right?”

“When are you moving to Cedar Hill?”

“Why?”

“I’ll leave the cell phone on and you can call me from Mayer, assuming you can find it. I’ll drive into town and pick the two of you up. Your car won’t handle the fire road.”

“I bought an H3, Hummer, Gar-Bear.”

“In that case, you and Linda can follow me back to the cabin.”

“We’re moving to Cedar Hill over the Labor Day weekend. Most places are closing on Monday, here in Palmdale. We sold our house and John and Kevin got an apartment.”

“Where’s Brenda?”

“Returned to Fort Smith and remarried her husband. Our house sale closes on Friday, September 1st. Our new home will be done on the same day and Robert can handle the movers if we’re not there.”

“We only have one bedroom, but Linda and you can use it and we can sleep in the loft.”

“Suits us. Sorry to put you out of your bed. The movers are picking up the furniture on the day before our home sale closes.”

“I’ll leave the cell phone on starting on Saturday, September 2nd. I’ve got to go and we’ll be looking forward to seeing you guys.”

“Ciao,” Ron replied and hung up his phone.

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It wasn't all that long until Ron and Linda were moving, a couple of weeks. I warned Sharon that we were having company, Ron and Linda. She was very happy to finally have some company and she started making plans. So did I, we had a fair amount of extra money and I called a contractor and had him dig a storm shelter and put in concrete walls, right away, like immediately. He said it would all be done and back filled by Friday, August 31st, even though the shelter was far deeper than typical, as in having a roof 10' below ground. He wouldn't pull building permits, since we didn't own the land. That suited me just fine. I used my John R. Lazarus identity, too. We had a fair amount of extra money and that was good because he had to charge us a little extra. That would wipe out all of our money and we'd be temporarily bankrupt, again.

I had called Matt and asked him for some extra money for medical bills that I couldn't prove and he wouldn't allow because I couldn't. Shoot, but I wasn't surprised, just temporarily bankrupt, again, a semi-regular occurrence. I knew that Matt would cover the temporary overdraft, for a fee, just like always. It was my money in the trust account and he could get over being angry. He didn't have our new cell phone number and I'd driven to another town and called him from a payphone. I may be a little slow, but I ain't totally stupid. I quit giving news reports, in my story.

That contractor put in a big hole, leveled it, poured a slab and before the concrete was cured, started to put in forms for poured walls. They pumped the concrete into the forms and two days later had the forms off and were constructing forms to pour the lid on. He told me an 8" lid would be more than enough. He had constructed a poured staircase on one end and put in steel steps. One small hole remained and he told me that if I had anything large to go in the shelter it was now or never. We had him put the freezer in the shelter. He finished the form, poured the concrete and said he'd see me in a few days. They had put in 4 sections of 6" PVC through the concrete floor in one corner of the storm shelter, for plumbing he said.

The following week they pulled the forms and back filled the hole on 3 sides. He told me that the concrete had an additive to permit fast setting. Whatever. I dug down under the slab and found the pipe stubs. They were about 3' apart. I put in a toilet in one and set a raised platform shower over the one in the corner. Water pipes ran in a third and electrical conduit the 4th. Once I got the place wired up a little with my romex, I tossed up a wall for the john and started to move the batteries, one at a time. Every one of those 100 batteries weighed the same – heavy! It freed up a room in the cabin so we wouldn't need to sleep in the loft.

I got all of the batteries hooked together, 25 48-volt banks and ran heavy cable to the house and lighter ones to the well house and my pole barn. Then, I started to move all of the food. It was the end of the month and my Social Security finally showed up and I bought 2 electric hot plates for the shelter and installed a sink. The only furniture was

the folding stuff we started out in the cabin with. Almost all of our food was now stored in the shelter. Rather than install a blast door, I put in a steel door and put a spring-loaded 1½” steel cover over the stair case entrance. There were the 2 of us and the shelter was huge, all things considered. It was 20’ wide by 40’ long. Let it storm now, I said.

Ron said, “Hello, we’re in Mayer.”

I said, “See you in 15 minutes, or so.”

I went through the motions, told Linda how sorry I was about her dad, you know, the usual. They followed me out on the highway and up the fire road to Sharon’s and my hideaway from the world. We hadn’t had the shelter when he called a couple of weeks before. I was keeping it for a surprise.

“I bought a new rifle.”

“What did you get?” I asked.

“A Winchester model 70 African in .458 Winchester caliber.”

“Oh, that. It was only a matter of time, Ron. I wrote that you already had one in one of my stories.”

“I just picked it up.”

“You did pick it up though, right?”

“Yeah.”

“You and the elephant rifle are like World War III. It’s not if it will happen, only when. How many model 70’s does that make?”

“Four. A .270, a 30-06, a .375 and a .458.”

“If you’re paying, I’m ready to go.”

“Go where?”

“Africa.”

“I’m going to Cedar Hill.”

“Lots of lions and elephants in Cedar Hill are there?”

“God, I hope not.”

“Why not?”

“Have you ever priced the ammo for those big rifles? What are you shooting these days?”

“Mostly my mouth. We have 2 Winchester 94 legacy rifles with the 24” barrels and 3 of Vaquero revolvers, all in .45 Colt.”

“Is that it?”

“Just a 12 gauge. A Mossberg 590A1.”

“Why did you disappear?”

“Somebody cleaned out our bank account and we were broke, behind on our bills and I couldn’t see any light at the end of the tunnel.”

“So you ran?”

“When I worked at Avco Finance, I spent more time looking for people than anything else. It seemed like a good idea at the time.”

“But with computers, they can track you.”

“Gary and Sharon yes, but not John and Mary Lazarus who died a long time ago. I’m John, she’s Mary.”

“So you stole somebody’s ID?”

“They won’t care, they’re dead. We have birth certificates, drivers’ licenses and Passports, the whole nine yards.”

“Did you buy the land?”

“We’re squatters.”

“Living in a rehabbed log cabin without a bomb shelter?”

“Does a storm shelter count?”

“Something new?”

“The concrete is still a little wet.”

“I thought you were broke.”

“We got caught up a little and after I called you, I had the shelter built. Now we’re broke again; it’s easier being broke – you don’t have to worry about your money.”

“Buried electrical wires?”

“Solar power. Come to the shelter and let me show you.”

“How many batteries do you have?”

“100, for a total of 20,000-amp hours.”

“How many solar panels?”

“40.”

“But no generator, right?”

“A little one, 6.5kw.”

“Lots of food.”

“A man’s gotta eat. We have a freezer full of meat, too.”

“Venison?”

“Yuck. Beef, pork and chickens.”

“Is that a barn?”

“Yep. We have 2 Morgan horses.”

“Which one is Salina?”

“Neither, we named them Ralph and Alice.”

“Antennas, water tower, well, shelter and cabin? All on someone else’s land, right?”

“At the moment, yes.”

“What are you going to do if they want their land back?”

“I’m not sure, Ron. But, I have a shovel.”

Bankrupt – Chapter 2

“I talked it over with Linda last night, Gar-Bear. If we can find out who owns the land and buy it, we can either sell it to Sharon and you on contract or rent it to you.”

“You’ll have to deal with John R. and Mary C. Lazarus, partner. Like you said, with computers, they can track you.”

“Whatever. Deal?”

“Hell yeah, Ron. Still bailing out your sponsee, huh?”

Ron found the owner the day after Labor Day and bought 5 acres at \$2,000 an acre. We agreed to pay him and Linda back out of each installment from the Trust Fund. They executed a Land Sale Contract in the names of John and Mary. Their new home was something else, to hear them describe it. It had a full basement with a foot of concrete for a lid. The house was built on the slab/lid just like most California homes. They had an outside access with a blast door, an Onan RS 30000, 10,000-gallons of propane and the LUWA system. They were going to outfit the basement with their old furniture and put new upstairs. Ron and Linda stayed a full week and then headed to New Mexico.

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We were almost flat broke for a full year, but we got the land paid for and then we were sitting pretty. Any important mail had been forward to Amy who put it in a new envelope and sent it to Phoenix. About 4 times a year we made calls to the kids to check up on them. We’d made a couple of more trips to California and brought back the rest of our furniture. Some went into the cabin and some into the storm shelter. We were getting by pretty good, all things considered. We filled out federal tax forms and mailed them to Amy who filed them. We didn’t have any income for state tax purposes, but we did pay property taxes.

Slowly, we began to accumulate a little money. I finished equipping the shelter with some used twin beds and used furniture from Goodwill. The shelter was bare bones, but what did we really need? I spent some money in Gonzales, Texas so that angle was covered. Some of those semi-annual trips to Costco were real heart breakers. By the time we stocked up on food and meat, filled the prescriptions, bought cigarettes, we’d gone through a lot of money. Mary joined a Quilting circle in Mayer or someplace close. At home, it was Gary and Sharon; away from home, it was John and Mary.

One day, a couple of years after everything in California had gone to hell, we received a check in our Phoenix box, forwarded by Amy. It was from the mortgage company and even after tacking on more fees than a person could ever imagine, they’d sold the house at a profit and had sent us a refund for about \$60,000. We endorsed the check and sent it to Matt by registered mail, from Phoenix. I called Ron and asked if they would like company. He said come anytime. I told him that as soon as we finished can-

ning, we'd do that. I found a guy to board the horses and a few weeks later, off we went. That was Labor Day weekend (2007). It seemed to me that the world was doing just fine without Gary and Sharon Ott. I bought a couple of things I wanted and invested most of that money in Krugerrands and silver coins. I was getting used to being broke.

"Long time."

"It was only a year. How's Clarence doing?"

"Haven't talked to him in over a year."

"What's new?"

"Same ol', different day. Get your shelter furnished?"

"Used is good, Ron. Did you buy radios and survey meters?"

"And nitro-pak; we're set for the end of the world."

"It's coming, you know. I bought a good used .22 rifle, a Winchester 9422."

"No Main Battle Rifles? Assault Rifles?"

"I'm saving my money. I might buy something one of these days." (lie)

"What are you going to buy?"

"An M1A, what else?" (true)

"Which model?"

"Whatever we can afford." (same lie)

"Some of their models are expensive."

"I have no idea which model at the moment." (same lie)

"7.62x51mm, MBR?"

"Right; I can add a scope and a Surefire FA762S suppressor." (very true)

"I bought a Super Match M1A."

"Good. I have to tell you, partner, my eyes aren't good enough anymore to need a fancy rifle." (same lie)

“Don’t you want to see it?”

“I’ll look to make you happy, but I’ve seen a picture. McMillian Marine Corps camo stock?”

“Yep.”

“Fancy scope?”

“Swarovski day vision and ITT 3rd generation night vision.”

“Ammo?”

“Black Hills.”

“Magazines?”

“20-20.”

“Nice. And a set of Winchester Africans to kill the lions and elephants, right?”

“Right.”

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Ron was way the hell out of my league. I wasn’t being totally truthful with him; I didn’t want him to get in trouble. I’d bought a Loaded and a Super Match and 50 20-round magazines. I also had the FA762S suppressors installed on both. I used the Gary D. Ott name to buy everything. I bought Black Hills 175gr BTHP match ammo for the Super Match plus 5,000 rounds of DAG for the Loaded. A leather check rest was a hell of a lot cheaper than the price difference between the Super Match and the M21. Had one hell of a time mounting the UNS night vision sight, too.

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“So, did you see any lions or elephants yet?”

“Nope, but they’re out there.”

“In zoos, partner.”

“They could always escape. Where can I get a suppressor?”

“Surefire makes the FA762S to fit on the M25 rifle. Try a class 3 dealer.”

“They’re LEO only.”

“Maybe I can get you one,” I offered.

“You’re not a cop.”

“I know one. I’ll get you the suppressor.”

“How much?”

“He charges around two grand.”

“How would you know?”

“I asked.”

“But you don’t have one, correct?”

“Correct.” (I have 2)

“Do you like my shelter?”

“If I had your shelter and you had a feather up your butt, we’d both be tickled.”

“Now all we need is a disaster.”

“Ron, there is a disaster every minute of every hour of every day, somewhere. It’s only a disaster if it affects you personally. Don’t wish for something to happen. You’re the one who taught me about God’s sense of humor.”

“Yeah, huh?”

Sharon had Amy contact the various people we’d run out on owing money and Amy negotiated a settlement with each and every one. We had paid our bills and were no longer dead beats. Still, we had gotten used to going by John and Mary and didn’t want to confuse anyone. Besides, having 2 identities was handy at times. Gary and Sharon Ott had a box in a Phoenix mail place. John and Mary Lazarus had a box in a Flagstaff mail place. The only problem I had remembering was who was which, or whatever. It’s ok; I’m confused most of the time anyway.

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There’s a disaster every minute of every hour of every day, somewhere. It’s only a disaster if it affects you personally. Chemical and biological weapons are the poor man’s nuclear weapons. Osama bin Laden isn’t poor. I heard that he had Saudi sponsors. I also figured that it was just a matter of time. Much to my chagrin, I was right. He hadn’t purchased any of the 1kt suitcase bombs. For very little more, he had acquired a pile of

100kt nuclear devices, probably Pakistani in origin, who knows? He must have gotten a volume discount.

The first bomb went off at the UN. That didn't tarnish his image. The second bomb went off in Harlem not far from Clinton's office, and to think that Bill let him get away, 3 times. Go figure. That bomb damaged his image. So did the other 10 bombs: Washington, 2 in Los Angeles, plus Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, San Diego, Detroit, Dallas and Phoenix. George was in Crawford. I could forgive Osama for Washington, the House and Senate were in session and the bomb went off as close to the Capitol as they could get the van. George took off in Air Force One and nobody knew where he was headed, nothing new there, right?

Between Phoenix, San Diego, and Los Angeles, I figured we were in trouble from fall-out. All of the hay I bought was stacked in a layer around the pole barn, the horses were safe, I hoped. They had automatic waterers. I even had a layer of hay on the roof, an idea I got from someone's fiction. In that instant that the bomb had gone off in Phoenix, for all practical purposes, Sharon and I ceased to exist. Well, sort of – all of our retirement payments went to the bank in Charles City. I called Matt before the cell phone went down and told him that we were alive and to hang on to the money for now.

We got the critters and went into the shelter. I turned on the TV to watch the end of the world; we were getting a signal from Flagstaff. My homemade LUWA filter was working just fine. I hoped that it would continue to work just fine. I turned on the CD V-717 and the CD V-715, the former on the highest scale and the latter on the lowest scale. I charged up 2 of the CD V-742's and gave one to Sharon. The world ended, pictures at 11. George came on TV after the EAS tone had sounded.

My fellow Americans...

I turned the news off and put in my copy of *Top Gun*. Maverick shot down the bad guys, again. Next I put on *In Harm's Way*. John Wayne lost a leg, but he was a hero. Next we watched *Midway* and Fonda playing Nimitz, again. Then to satisfy Sharon, we watched *The American President* with Annette Bening and Michael Douglas. I quit liking Martin Sheen after Iraqi Freedom. I liked Michael Douglas in the end when he finally stood up to Richard Dreyfuss. I liked the fire in his speech although it went against everything I believe in. Nobody is getting my guns! They sure made Annette look young.

I turned the news off because I figured George would just find someone new to blame and I didn't want to know whom. I should have listened. George blamed the Axis of Evil. He didn't have much nice to say about France either. He nuked Syria, Iran, North Korea and Pakistan. I'll bet that made the Indians happy. China decided not to respond. Instead, they moved their troops near Pakistan. I'll just bet Muammar Gadhafi dirtied his drawers. As far as I'm concerned, the Chinese can have Afghanistan, too. When it later turned out that Osama was behind the entire thing, George nuked the Saudis too. I didn't know we still had neutron bombs. That's what he used on his pals, the Saudis. I

imagine Daddy Bush was telling him not to because Jeb was going to run for President in 2012 or 2016.

“Ronald McDonald, do you have a call sign?”

“Negatory. How about you?”

“KD6GDQ.”

“It was only a matter of when, not if.”

“I’m glad we took your advice. You got one in Phoenix, huh?”

“Rog, 1 in San Diego, 2 in LA and 1 in Phoenix. I have a radiation level that went off the scale but is down to about 250R/hr at the moment.”

“We’re at 300R/hr so we’ll be a little slower coming out.”

“Who are we?”

“Linda, Robert and Johnnie Rae plus the pets.”

“Any elephants or lions?”

“Negatory. You?”

“Me what?”

“Do you have any lions or elephants?”

“I saw a pink elephant once. Nope. Sharon, me and the pets.”

“Did you ever get those things you mentioned to me?”

“Had them all of the time. Did you get your new flashhider installed?”

“Rog. It really does hide the flash, doesn’t it?”

“10-4. Same channel in 72?”

“10-4.”

◦

“That means you lied to me, Gar-Bear.”

"10-4. At the time you didn't have one of those fancy flashhiders. Now, it doesn't matter."

"I should have bought two."

"I have an extra. I can send it by UPS in about a year or two."

"What kind of Fast Attach mount?"

"M25. I decided that I wasn't so blind after all."

"Good, it will fit on Robert's Super Match. When the radiation dies down, how about we come after it?"

"Do you have gold?"

"10-4."

"2 Krugerrands."

"That's robbery but, hey, it's the end of the world, right?"

"Last I looked it was. What did your pal George have to say?"

"He nuked Syria, Iran, North Korea and Pakistan right away. Later, he nuked the Saudis. He used neutron bombs on them."

"Didn't want to damage their oil?"

"I guess."

"Stay in the shelter until the reading is 50mR/hr, regardless of how long it takes. We'll be looking for you folks from the time we hit 50mR/hr."

"10-4."

They showed up two weeks after I noted that our radiation level was 50mR/hr. Obviously we had gotten more radiation than they had. Aside from being hungry and a little ill, Ralph and Alice would survive. This was good. The Chevy started without any work. That was better. Then I remembered that the nukes were detonated on the ground and realized that we shouldn't have had any EMP at all. We were almost exactly 75 miles from Phoenix. At 50mR/hr, it was safe to be stay out of the shelter, so we did. I hosed everything down and checked for any radiation. There wasn't any that hadn't decayed. So, we thawed some steaks and had a barbeque. I gave Ron his flashhider and he gave me 2 Krugerrands.

“What now?” Ron asked.

“I don’t know about you, partner, but I was thinking we ought to get to Barstow before it all gets picked over. As many stories as I’ve written, everyone knows to head to Barstow when TSHTF.”

“What do we need?”

“Do you have any automatic weapons?”

“No.”

“I have 2 of the M1A’s, with scopes and suppressors and that’s about it. I figure some M16A3’s, some M203’s, ammo, grenades. You know the usual.”

“How far is it to Barstow?”

“370 miles.”

“I don’t have enough fuel to go there and get back to New Mexico.”

“So, fill up the Hummer from the cans in the well house. You can put the extra cans on top.”

“You have fuel?”

“I have gas and diesel, take whatever you need.”

“We should leave Jonnie Rae, Linda and Sharon here.”

“Nonsense. Who would drive back the M1114 HMMWV’s?”

“Will we find any?”

“I have no idea, but having 3 or 4 of those couldn’t hurt. We’ll have to take my Chevy and your H3, anyway, if we take the girls. We can hook onto a trailer in Flagstaff and you’ll have a trailer too.”

“Does that Hummer have provision for a gun?”

“You bet it does. It will take the Mk 19, the Ma Deuce or a M240.”

“Which one are you going to get?”

“One of each, if I can. Plus a couple of the M16A3/M203’s, and maybe an Mk15 if I can find the weapons and the Ammo.”

“Anything else?”

“SINCGARS radios, Ron. They’re encrypted.”

“The M1114’s will already have radios, right?”

“Right, but we need base stations and antennas.”

“When do you want to go?”

“Right now, the early bird gets the worm.”

“My better judgment tells me not to do this.”

“Tell your better judgment to shut up. Or, if you’re chicken, Sharon and I’ll go alone.”

I figured that calling Ronald McDonald a chicken would work. It did. Off we went to California to loot the Marine Corps Depot at Barstow/Yermo. We stopped in Flagstaff and borrowed a U-Haul trailer for his H3. I didn’t much care for that H3; it just didn’t look like an H1 Alpha. It took us 7 hours, between one thing and another, to get to the Depot. It took longer to find what we wanted. I took a dozen of the M16A3/M203’s. I got one case (72 grenades) of HE 40mm grenades per rifle. I got an M1114 and the 3 weapons I wanted and all of the ammo I could carry. We found some trailers at the Depot and that allowed us to steal more. I found a Navy Mk 15 bolt action .50 caliber rifle complete with extra 5 round magazines, Nightforce 12-42x56mm scope, night vision rail and a Magnum Universal Night Sight, Elite Iron suppressor with Raufoss and M1022 ammo. I also took all of the MRE’s that I had room for. We fueled the vehicles, filled our cans with diesel fuel and headed home about 15 hours after we left. We refueled in Needles, at the point of a Ma Deuce. The guy didn’t even come out from behind the counter.

Sharon drove the Chevy and I drove the M1114. They really aren’t all that roomy, are they? Now we were truly ready for the end of the world. When we got back to the cabin, Ron and Robert helped me install the SINCGARS antenna on the pole and I hooked up the radio, down in my radio room in the shelter. They spent the night and took off the next day to return to Cedar Hill. They were Unit 1 and Unit 2. I was Unit 3. If we were mobile, it was Unit 1 Mike, etc. The next day, Sharon and I headed to Flagstaff and I got a trailer of fuel, one tank gas and the other diesel. Sharon drove the M1114 and pulled a trailer that we filled with bottles of propane. We didn’t have a bit of trouble because the Mk 19 was mounted. That went so well we unloaded the trailer and went back to Flagstaff and got another trailer load of propane bottles, and, a 3rd. Then, there wasn’t any more propane to get and people were looking. I didn’t want to overstay our welcome, so we didn’t go back.

“Unit 3, Unit 1.”

“I’m here.”

“Where have you been?”

“Shopping. I have 8,000-gallons of premium and 8,000-gallons of diesel fuel. I also have all of the bottles of propane that they had in Flagstaff that I could find.”

“10-4. Any trouble?”

“Negatory. We were wearing the Mk 19.”

“10-4. We’re going to Durango and have a look around.”

“You can wear an Mk 19 and a Ma Deuce.”

“10-4. Tango, Tango, Yankee, Lima.”

“Sierra, Hotel. 10-4.”

It might not be good radio procedure, but if the FCC didn’t like it, they could come looking. The nearest Costco was in Prescott. The very last time we’d gone to Costco, it had been in the store in Prescott because it was only 27 miles away. We had cash, gold and silver. We had an Mk 19. Best dang door opener you’ve ever seen. The store was open and we bought all we could carry, unloaded and went back. We did that until they closed the doors. I told Sharon that we had enough beans and rice to last until the next Century. We could only buy one freezer full of meat and a little extra because they only had one freezer. We filled it with whatever meat we could get, mostly 12% ground beef. I got all of the chili powder I needed for that much beef and maybe a little extra, as in several cases. Venison isn’t too bad made into chili. Costco was still taking cash, but they would redeem gold and silver and double the price I paid for it. We were getting poor, but ½ the usual rate.

I hadn’t checked the cell phone – I thought it was dead. It rang. It was Matt. Derek and Damon were at the bank trying to get money. I told him to give them as much as his conscience would let him. He said he give them each \$10,000 under the circumstances and send \$10,000 with Derek for Sharon. He also said that Derek wanted to talk to me.

Bankrupt – Chapter 3

“Dad?”

“Derek?”

“I haven’t been able to find you since I got back from Iraq.”

“You found me now. What’s up kid?”

“Where are you?”

“Go to Mayer, Arizona and call for John and Mary on channel 23 on your CB radio. I’ll come after you.”

“Where is Mayer, Arizona?”

“The same place it’s always been, south of Flagstaff on state route 69. Take I-17 south to 169 and west to 69 and then south to Mayer. It’s longer, but they nuked Phoenix.”

“Do you have everything you need, Dad?”

“No. I sure hope you like venison chili.”

o

The only thing I can figure out was that Derek must have told Matt that we were living on venison. I never said that, but that was the impression I was trying to create. Matt gave each of the boys \$20,000 plus \$20,000 for Sharon and all of the money in our bank accounts. It took them the better part of a week to get here. Once Sharon found out that the cell phone worked, she called Amy on her cell phone. She told Amy to get David and Lorrie and all of the kids and come to Mayer, Arizona. When they got to Mayer, they were to call for John and Mary on CB channel 23. With our new found wealth coming, Sharon and I returned to Prescott and bought more of what they had, especially coffee, beans and rice. I was forced to use the gold, but it wasn’t going down in value. Costco ran out of food before I ran out of money, the reverse of normal. They also sold us both 1-year supplies of our prescriptions without prescriptions. It was a National Emergency, the pharmacist said. Hell, I knew that. BTW, after the first trip to Costco, we took the Chevy and a trailer.

o

Derek is a qualified Combat Lifesaver. He can do IV’s and stuff like that. I didn’t have any IV stuff because I didn’t know how to use it. But there was a hospital in Flagstaff and in Prescott. And, we had gold and it was a National Emergency. Derek is an E-6 now, you know. Got that when he was in Iraq. I had enough weapons to go around, lots

of ammo and Derek had his BDU's and a military ID card. Combat Lifesaver's are trained to provide immediate aid until a medic or a corpsman can take over.

The combat lifesaver carries a small aid bag containing his medical supplies. The aid bag weighs a little over nine pounds and takes up about 0.44 cubic feet. The aid bag consists of the following items:

- Two bottles containing 50 acetaminophen tablets (such as Tylenol). Administered for headache, common cold, and minor pain.
- One roll of adhesive tape. Used to secure the I.V. catheter and tubing to the casualty's arm.
- Two rubber artificial airways. Used to keep the airway of an unconscious casualty open.
- Five atropine autoinjectors. Used to administer additional antidote to nerve agent casualties.
- Eighteen self-adhesive bandages with attached sterile pad. Used to protect minor wounds.
- What is usually called an "ace" bandage is a gauze elastic cling bandage. While the combat lifesaver does not bandage sprains, this bandage can be useful as a reinforcement bandage and as padding for a splint.
- Four muslin bandages. Used to secure splints and used as tourniquet bands, slings, and swathes.
- Nylon case. Used to carry the medical supplies. The case has three zippered compartments for storing supplies and a shoulder strap.
- Two catheter and needle units. Used in administering intravenous infusion.
- Five CANA autoinjectors. Used to alleviate convulsions in nerve agent casualties.
- Six field first-aid dressings. Used to control bleeding and protect wounds.
- Three pairs of rubber sterile patient examining gloves. Used when initiating IVs for the protection of both casualty and combat lifesaver.
- Two intravenous injection sets. Connects the IV bag to the needle and catheter unit. The clamp controls the rate at which the fluid flows from the bag.
- Six packets of povidone-iodine impregnated cotton pads. Used to cleanse skin, especially before performing the IV puncture.
- Eight packets of povidone-iodine ointment. Used to protect minor wounds from infection.
- One bottle containing 24 pseudoephedrine hydrochloride tablets (such as Sudafed®). Administered for allergies.
- Two IV bags. Each bag contains slightly more than a pint of sterile fluid to be administered intravenously to avoid hypovolemic shock.
- One pair of scissors. Used to cut the casualty's clothing to expose wounds, cut muslin bandages into triangular bandages, and cut tape.
- One SAM splint. Used in splinting fractured limbs.
- Fourteen inches of rubber tourniquet (flat). Used as a constricting band when performing the IV task.

Here is a second description from the same Internet page:

- 2 Bottles Acetaminophen, 60 tablets per bottle
- 2 Spool Adhesive tape, surgical, porous, woven, 1 x 10 yards
- 1 Airway pharyngeal, large adult
- 1 Airway pharyngeal, small adult
- 5 Atropine injection squeezy type 0.7ml syringe with needle
- 18 bandage adhesive 3/4x3 inches flesh
- 4 Bandage gauze elastic, 5 yd x 2 in
- 4 Bandage muslin compressed brown 37x37x52" triangular with pins
- 1 case medical instrument and supply set polyamide nylon nonrigid
- 2 Catheter and needle unit, d12 IV 18 ga radiopaque. Disp
- 5 Diazepam injection USP, 5mg/2ml syringe-needle unit
- 6 Dressing first aid field camouflaged 4" w x 6.25-7.25" lg. abs
- 3 PR Gloves, patient exam, med-lrg
- 2 Intravenous inj set, 7 comp macrodrip 10 drops/ml
- 12 Pad povidone-iodine impre. ster. 2x1.375" brown
- 8 Povidone-iodine oint USP 10% 1/8 oz (3.54 gram) I.S.
- 1 Co Psuedoephedrine hydrochloride tablets USP 30mg, 24/container
- 2 Ringer's injection lactate 500ml plastic bag
- 1 Scissors bandage 1.5" Cut lg 7.25" O/a lg both blades blunt crs
- 1 Splint universal 36x4.5" malleable alum radiolucent ltwt
- 1 Tourniquet nonpneumatic adult 14x1" bld taking dsgn rubber

If they say so fine... It is mostly bandages, stuff to deal with nerve agents and bullet wounds. You should be able to take a hint from the list. If you're going to get an IV solution to replace fluids, I think you should get Ringer's lactate. Lactated Ringer's solution (commonly abbreviated "LR") is an isotonic solution intended for intravenous administration. One liter of this solution contains: 130 mEq of sodium ion, 109 mEq of chloride ion, 3 mEq of calcium ion, 4 mEq of potassium ion, and 28 mEq of lactate. Check with Desert Doc. My plan is to have normal saline, D5W and Ringer's. I'm not a doctor, what do I know?

o

Amy and Lorrie must have had trouble finding fuel or they followed Sharon's directions. I didn't want to know, it would avoid a fight. Dumb is good, sometimes. Sharon could give directions. She could get you from Gary, Indiana to Chicago, Illinois via Cleveland, Ohio. If you wanted to get to Mayer from California, take I-40 to Flagstaff and turn south on I-17 and then follow the directions I gave Derek. I didn't think taking I-10 was so hot of an idea. Neither did the kids, once they got to Jackrabbit Trail. They ended up in Prescott and eventually in Mayer. They took 303 to US 60 to 89 to Prescott. They must have had a map.

The shelter was fairly full of food. David and Lorrie brought my 10'x14' tent they borrowed and never returned and they slept in it. I probably told them to keep it. Everyone else slept in the loft, in the shelter or on the living room floor. We were making large

pots of chili, goulash and white beans, once in a while, for a change. When Damon and Derek showed up, Derek handed Sharon a bag of money. She kept it and wouldn't even let me look in the bag.

"So kid, you have a rifle?"

"Nope. I have a M9."

"They're good for jackrabbits. Do you want a M16A3/M203?"

"I saw the HMMWV when we pulled in. Been to Barstow?"

"Yep."

"Do you have a hand gun?"

"Cowboys guns, .45 Colts."

"It was good enough for George S. Patton."

"Mine isn't engraved and it's a genuine Ruger."

"Do you have more than one?"

"Yep."

"Can I have one?"

"Nope. But I'll loan you Sharon's. All she wanted was a Winchester rifle and a scabbard for her horse so she could shoot rattlesnakes."

"Did she?"

"Did she what?"

"Shoot a rattlesnake?"

"That snake took one look and headed for the high country. A Morgan is a good sized horse."

"Which one is Salina?"

"Their names are Ralph and Alice. They're on their honeymoon."

o

“Hello, Americans! This is Paul Harvey! ... You know what the news is. Now you’re going to hear... the R-r-rest of the Story!

“Pert Kelton, the original Alice, left while the sketch was still part of *The Jackie Gleason Show* (1952) due to purported health problems (it was later revealed she had been blacklisted). Audrey Meadows was approached for suggestions about who could replace Kelton. After rattling off a list of actresses, none of whom were suitable for one reason or another, Meadows finally suggested herself. Jackie Gleason initially rejected her on the grounds that she was too young and pretty. Meadows, determined to get the part, had a photographer come to her house at 7:00 the next morning, and had pictures taken of herself without makeup, her hair pinned up with combs she’d slept on, and wearing a torn blouse, a skirt, and an apron. When Gleason saw the pictures he exclaimed happily, “That’s Alice!” and asked who it was. When told it was the same young actress he’d rejected the day before, he said, *Any dame with a sense of humor like that deserves the job. Hire her!*

“...and now you know [pause] the Rest of the Story. Paul Harvey. [pause] Good day!”

o

I never listen to Paul Harvey myself, especially now that they nuked Chicago. His broadcasts and newspaper columns have been reprinted in the Congressional Record more than those of any other commentator. That isn’t even his real last name anyway. Paul Harvey is his first name and middle name. Derek is the real radio fan in the family. He liked Paul Harvey and What’s His Name, Rush somebody. Limbaugh, that’s it. It is spelled V-I-C-O-D-I-N.

As reported by Wonkette.com, Limbaugh’s comments can be found on his website. From the May 4 Rush Limbaugh Show, titled *It’s Not About Us; This Is War!*”

CALLER: It was like a college fraternity prank that stacked up naked men –

LIMBAUGH: Exactly. Exactly my point! This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation and we’re going to ruin people’s lives over it and we’re going to hamper our military effort, and then we are going to really hammer them because they had a good time. You know, these people are being fired at every day. I’m talking about people having a good time, these people, you ever heard of emotional release? You ever heard of need to blow some steam off?

How many Vicodin aren’t you taking? I remember Rush, now.

It’s just a good thing that boy of mine doesn’t like Howard Stern. That’s Damon, but you know he’s crazy. I gave Damon the shotgun to use. He gets shells if the MZB’s attack. That could happen, if they could find the cabin way up here in the dessert and woods. I try to never say never, because you just don’t know about MZB’s. Just when you’re down at their camp waiting for them to come home, they turn up at your place. Damon

explained it to me. He must be one of them. I'm certain he's a mutant and when he takes his pills, it turns him into a real zombie. And, he does own a Harley. He does like to play with explosives, calling them *model rockets*. Like father, like son, except I don't have a Harley. Same track, different train.

o

"Why did you name them Ralph and Alice?"

"Gee, it seemed like the thing to do at the time. So do you want the M16A3, or not?"

"Do you have a Barrett rifle?"

"Nope, want one?"

"Only if you have some Raufoss ammo."

"It's your lucky day. I saw some at Barstow, the Marine model. Got myself the Navy model, the McMillan Tac-50."

Eating all of the chili wasn't such a good idea, I guess. I could always build a methane plant. My buddy on the East Coast says his wife won't let him eat beans. Chew them completely it helps, a little. Eating beans and homemade bread is an American tradition. That little joke about lighting someone's gas expulsions is a very bad idea. They might blow up, the person – not the gas expulsions. Never say never because God has a sense of humor.

"Unit 1, this is Unit 3."

"Go ahead, Unit 3."

"What's up?"

"My blood pressure and the price of gold."

"Derek and Damon and Amy and Lorrie showed up."

"I've got Jennifer, Brenda and Paula."

"Have you heard from John or Kevin?"

"Nope."

"Are you squared away?"

"Negatory, we need gas."

“Gas I’ve got to spare, but I don’t have any gasoline to spare.”

“Eating beans?”

“Rog. It’s a shame that I don’t have a methane plant.”

“10-4. Who else can hear us?”

“I have no idea. Probably anyone on the same channel, why?”

“I was going to talk about the flashhiders I got from you.”

“How many do you want?”

“In the 762, none. In the 556, 2 dozen.”

“Same price. You know where we are.”

“Do you have enough?”

“You said that you wanted two dozen. I only figured on two dozen for you so I got 36.”

“You didn’t tell me you had any of the M4-FA.”

“You didn’t ask. Do you have 48 Krugerrands?”

“Yes.”

“As I said, you know where we live.”

“Does the price include the Fast Attach mounts?”

“Yes. Complete suppressor system includes: Suppressor, Carrying Pouch, Compensator/Adapter, Timing Wheel, Shim Set, Tube of Rocksett, Cleaning Brush, Manual.”

“We’ll be there, ASAP.”

“10-4.”

“How much did they cost you?”

“Well, the FA762S’s cost me just about what I charged you, \$2,062. I have a copy of Surefire’s pdf file on my computer. I intentionally misstated the price but I knew that gold was probably double and I would break about even.”

“And the M4-FA are complete systems, partner.”

You may have noticed that I didn't answer his question about the price of the M4-FA-BC-203. The seller had charged me \$2,062 each for the FA762S-B, which had a MSRP of \$1,662 complete. The seller had charged me \$2,200 each for the 556 units that had a MSRP of \$1,700 complete. I was going to make out a little better on the M4-FA-BC-203, the only models I bought. However, it was most definitely a Seller's Market. The Krugerrands were hovering around \$2,200 if they were 24 carat gold, but they were 22 carat gold and were going for around \$2,100 although they still contained one full ounce of gold. I had been gouged by the very same Seller's Market and had to pay. Now, Ron was going to have to pay me to get what he should have planned on in the first place. He had read enough of my stories to know that I always headed to Barstow, the minute I could.

Offering to let him read the Surefire price list had been a little risky, but I rather suspected that once I had told him what the FA762S had cost me, he would accept my price. All models of the M4-FA suppressors cost the same MSRP, \$1,600. And, I could have always gone back to Barstow/Yermo and picked up more of the M16A3's without the M203. I had planned ahead on this one, and Ron had one hell of a lot more money than I did. So, maybe I was making about \$500 on each suppressor, but I had them and he didn't. I needed the money that I thought I was making now that the kids were all here. The fella had given me a little discount because I bought 36 and paid cash. Otherwise, I'm relatively sure he'd have charged me about \$2,100, the same \$400 over. The FA762S had a MSRP of \$1,652, complete and he'd charged me \$2062. It may have evened out a little in my favor.

Apparently Costco didn't realize that the Krugerrands were 22-carat and had allowed the 24-carat Maple Leaf price. Which I assumed was \$2,200 an ounce. Somebody got screwed and it very could very well have been me. I don't really care; I wanted the Krugerrands in case Costco reopened its doors. Confused? Me too, but I told you that, remember? Costco never did reopen their doors, either. No matter how it all worked out, I ended up with 48 more of the Krugerrands. I was happy so it doesn't matter. Please don't tell me if I screwed up. I'm vain, too and I don't really want to know. Besides, the price of gold might go higher. Both the 22 carat and 24 carat coins contain one troy ounce of gold.

o

I could tell that Derek was antsy. Hell, so was I. If this what the country was like after a dozen bombs, what would it be like if a major power hit us with several hundred weapons? It's the iceberg you don't see that sinks the ship. Ron and Robert came to get the suppressors but they couldn't stay. I got my gold, they got the suppressors and they were on the road home.

Mounting the suppressors on the M16's wasn't hard. You replaced the flashhider with the Fast Attach mount/adaptor and you could take the silencer off and on at will. We

had 12 suppressors and 12 rifles, that's why I only got 12 at Barstow, and they were the cat's whisker. The suppressor actually increased the velocity of the round about 50fps. Most of the ammo was the M855 variety. Derek stayed in his BDU's. He carried an A3 and Beretta most of the time and had that Kraut helmet on his head. He almost looked like George Patton when the light was just right. Same build, similar demeanor and all business.

There wasn't much business here in the high chaparral. Finally he came to me and said that they wanted to go back to Flippin. I loaded them down with 2 A3's, ammo, grenades and the usual assortment of TSHTF survival gear, including MRE's. If he wanted a Barrett rifle of his own, let him go to the shaky state. However, I liked the Patton look and I had 2 of the Vaqueros, so I gave him one. I told Damon to keep the shotgun, too.

For the boys, returning to the Midwest wasn't a big deal. Flippin was about as safe as you could find. Even if something got out of hand, it wasn't really a target. Neither was northern Iowa. They had only stayed 2 months, but Mary's family was in Flippin, all of them, and she really wanted to get home. Almost as effortlessly as they had drifted in on the wind, they were gone. I gave Damon all of the shotgun ammo and told him not to shoot himself. Derek and Mary had been well equipped when they pulled out.

The President was out of his hidey-hole and efforts were being made to clean up the cities. LA and New York were in the worst shape, having taken 2 1mT bombs each. As mentioned, the New York bombs were in the areas of the United Nations building and another in the area of Harlem where Bill Clinton had his office. The UN was in session and a 1mT bomb going off in the parking lot took a goodly section of lower Manhattan. The Harlem bomb just added to the chaos.

When the bombs went off, the wind was out of the west at about 15mph. Here's the damage caused by each bomb:

Wind speed: 15 mph
Wind direction: due east
Time frame: 7 days

3,000 Rem
Distance: 30 miles
Much more than a lethal dose of radiation. Death can occur within hours of exposure. About 10 years will need to pass before levels of radioactivity in this area drop low enough to be considered safe, by US peacetime standards.

900 Rem
Distance: 90 miles
A lethal dose of radiation. Death occurs from two to fourteen days.

300 Rem
Distance: 160 miles

Causes extensive internal damage, including harm to nerve cells and the cells that line the digestive tract, and results in a loss of white blood cells. Temporary hair loss is another result.

90 Rem

Distance: 250 miles

Causes a temporary decrease in white blood cells, although there are no immediate harmful effects. Two to three years will need to pass before radioactivity levels in this area drop low enough to be considered safe, by US peacetime standards.

Radius of destructive circle: 1.7 miles

12 pounds per square inch

At the center lies a crater 200 feet deep and 1000 feet in diameter. The rim of this crater is 1,000 feet wide and is composed of highly radioactive soil and debris. Nothing recognizable remains within about 3,200 feet (0.6 miles) from the center, except, perhaps, the remains of some buildings' foundations. At 1.7 miles, only some of the strongest buildings – those made of reinforced, poured concrete – are still standing. Ninety-eight percent of the population in this area are dead.

Radius: 2.7 miles

5 psi

Virtually everything is destroyed between the 12 and 5 psi rings. The walls of typical multi-story buildings, including apartment buildings, have been completely blown out. The bare, structural skeletons of more and more buildings rise above the debris as you approach the 5 psi ring. Single-family residences within this area have been completely blown away – only their foundations remain. Fifty percent of the population between the 12 and 5 psi rings are dead. Forty percent are injured.

Radius: 4.7 miles

2 psi

Any single-family residences that have not been completely destroyed are heavily damaged. The windows of office buildings have been blown away, as have some of their walls. The contents of these buildings' upper floors, including the people who were working there, are scattered on the street. A substantial amount of debris clutters the entire area. Five percent of the population between the 5 and 2 psi rings are dead. Forty-five percent are injured.

Radius: 7.4 miles

1 psi

Residences are moderately damaged. Commercial buildings have sustained minimal damage. Twenty-five percent of the population between the 2 and 1 psi rings have been injured, mainly by flying glass and debris. Many others have been injured from thermal

radiation – the heat generated by the blast. The remaining seventy-five percent are un-hurt.

People on the fringe between the two blasts got a double whammy. And, the same thing happened in Los Angeles; one bomb went off near the Civic Center and the other in the Valley. The only saving grace to the blasts in LA was the mountains in between. The loss of life in the two cities was staggering. And, 8 other cities were hit as well. They were the population centers of the country – the terrorists had attacked the 9 largest cities and Washington. However, the targets were all over the map: New York, Los Angeles, Washington, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, San Diego, Detroit, Dallas and Phoenix. California and Texas were hit particularly hard. A state by state summary is: New York – 2, California – 3, Texas – 2, DC – 1, Illinois – 1, Michigan – 1, Pennsylvania – 1 and Arizona – 1.

I still couldn't figure out why they hadn't hit Florida, I can only assume they ran out of bombs. Manhattan and southern California were virtual write-offs. Texas didn't fare much better because of the oil capitals, Dallas and especially Houston. The information I passed on above clearly suggests that the areas of multiple blasts wouldn't be inhabitable for nearly a generation. Out to a range of nearly 3 miles radius, at least 50% of the people died. A rather permanent solution to a temporary problem, wouldn't you say?

Bankrupt – Chapter 4

David and Lorrie decided to relocate to Albuquerque. Amy decided that she wanted to try Denver. Sharon and I divided up the \$20,000 from Matt to get them started, 50-50. Perhaps because of the widespread aspect of the terrorist attacks, the country didn't grind to a halt. George set up a temporary office in Kansas City, Missouri along with a hastily elected/appointed Congress. There wasn't a Supreme Court left so he got to start from scratch. He ended up with a court of 5 conservatives, 2 liberals and 2 moderates. The Congress was the usual mix of conservatives and liberals with a heavy emphasis on one or the other. Consider who had been killed, the people in the large cities.

With only Iraq left to fight and many of the insurgents beginning to lose their supporting legs, the President declared an end to the war on terror. That was the good news. The bad news was that every provision of the USA Patriot Act and a few new ones came into being. Terms like, *hiding behind the Bill of Rights* became popular in some circles. Everyone knows how I feel about the USA Patriot Act and its intrusion on the Constitution. Many gun laws were repealed, but not enough to suit me. For everything we gained, we lost something else. The government began efforts to recover *several thousand* automatic weapons and destructive munitions that had somehow come up missing from armories, arsenals and depots.

I parked the HMMWV on a street in Flagstaff, minus the weapons and radio and rode home in the Chevy with Sharon. I had a project to complete in my shelter; I figured that it was about 10' too long. To hide the construction, I hand laid a row of block that I filled as I went along. The doorway to the 'shortened space' presented a problem until I remember a story I'd written. I built a soda bar right here in the shelter. It had a large used super market refrigerator to store the soft drinks, right in front of the door. Once the refrigerator was filled, it must have weighed several hundred pounds. It wasn't going anywhere in that condition! Unless you slid your foot under one corner and pumped a little jack that raised it off the floor. Then it slid to the left as if it weighed nothing. It was my *special storage room*.

Everything that I didn't have ended up in that room; it also provided a convenient workspace for my communications gear and computers and the like. Sharon and I made certain that when David and Lorrie bought a home in Albuquerque it was: 1) outside of town 10 miles to the west; and, 2) had a basement that David could build a shelter in. We also helped Amy and made certain that her rental home had a basement. Rather than giving them money directly, we had them make lists of supplies they might want in an emergency and paid for the supplies and had them delivered. The Mrs. or I added anything that they should have that they hadn't included, like equipment from Gonzales, Texas, etc.

For Christmas, a year later, I bought David and Amy a round of used firearms including a scoped .308/7.62 Remington bolt action rifle, a defensive shotgun and a Ruger 10/22 plus a gun safe and ammunition. I also sent each family a portion of my gold and silver. It included 5 Krugerrands, and one roll each of silver dimes, quarters and halves. All 4

families, not just Amy and Lorrie. I gave the boys a second check equal to the price of the firearms, etc.

I tripped across one hell of a deal one day. The guy who sold me the M1As gave me a ring, out of the blue. Was I interested in a Russian shotgun, he wanted to know. I asked if it was one of those Saiga 12K's and sure enough. He had a dozen of the 8 round magazines, too but would only take gold. The Russian shotgun was based on the time-proven Kalashnikov AK-47 assault rifle design. It and the magazines cost me a Kruggerand and some silver quarters. Firepower! 8 rounds as fast as you can pull the trigger and a few seconds to change the magazine. It sort of fit in with the other stuff in my special storage room. Which I should be quick to point out made the wife very unhappy. We hadn't needed to defend ourselves from any MBZ's and she was ready for me to lay down my guns. The short version of what I told her was, "No." Not quite that gracefully, but you get the idea. We were back for a while to living hand-to-mouth while we were getting Lorrie and Amy set up for the next TSHTF situation.

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I always thought of the twilight of my years of being a time of peace and quiet. In a pigs eye. The boys were doing ok, especially Derek. Ron had finally heard from Clarence and they were doing fine in Alabama. Robert seemed to be doing well, age mostly and the family heritage of heart disease. Ron was running down too and although we kept in touch twice a week on the Ham Radios, I was a little worried. All the years of a bad heart, high cholesterol and COPD were taking their toll. The doctor had finally put him on oxygen as an additive (2 liters) to his CPAP machine. That really helped, he even sounded a little better on the radio. He told me that both Robert and Johnnie Rae weren't much longer for this world. With them gone, he couldn't see any reason not to move to Mayer.

Man was I excited! We could yell at each other over a back fence or something. That wasn't what he had in mind. He wanted I should sell him ½ of my 5 acres that Linda and he had helped Sharon and me acquire. Why not? In my best Bob Barker voice, I told him, *Come on Down*. It would be a while he said, but they'd like to come over to visit and have a look around.

"What did Bob and you do with the Hummers and the weapons?"

"The M1114's ended up on a street in Durango. The rest of the stuff is in a hidden closet in my basement."

"Et tu Brute?"

"Huh?"

"Let me show you my gun room."

“You ought to automate that lift device, somehow.”

“It only takes 6 pumps to clear the floor.”

“What kind of AK is that?”

“It’s one of those Saiga 12K’s.”

“7 rounds?”

“8 plus one in the pipe.”

“How many mags?”

“A dozen.”

“Remind me to never po you. Are those booties on the ends of the muzzles?”

“Soaked in oil. Sharon crocheted them for me.”

“Radio shack, weapons and munitions storage, workbench and computer center – you could practically live here.”

“I do every time she gets angry. Are you serious about moving here?”

“You damn right I am, Gar-Bear. Robert is on his last leg and Johnnie Rae is only half a length back. They’ll go like a photo finish.”

“Will you have trouble selling your home in Cedar Hill?”

“I must get 2 or 3 people a week looking to buy it. The word got around that Robert and my home had shelters and since that terrorist thing, people are looking for a nice safe place to bug out to.”

“You want to be careful somebody doesn’t wait until TSHTF and try and take over that home.”

“YOU the voice of caution? I don’t believe it.”

“Let go see where we can find you 2½ acres. I have a well so you won’t need one. The septic system was built oversized. About all you need is a propane tank.”

“What did you do with the gas and diesel fuel you swiped?”

“I put in 2 7,500-gallon tanks, stabilized it and keep them topped off.”

“I’m going to need to put in a large propane tank, you know.”

“The generator? Build it bigger and I’ll split the cost. I generally get by ok with the solar, but in the middle of winter, it’s hard to keep the roof clear. I’ve been saving up for an Onan RS 30000 and have enough money to pay for one now.”

“How big is your water tank?”

“I think about 5,000, I don’t really remember. It’s plenty big unless we’d get a fire. The well pump is powered by solar generated electricity. What am I saying? At the moment, everything is powered by solar powered electricity. You don’t happen to know where we could find a good used 20 or 30 thousand gallon propane tank do you?”

“I might have an idea where we could get something a little bigger, used. It won’t hurt if it’s not filled to the top you know.”

“Can we meter our usage?”

“Easy.”

“What do you think of this spot for a home? There’s a little shade and it isn’t that far from our house. We could probably put in a tunnel between our two shelters. Get a deck of cards and play canasta or something the next time TSHTF.”

“What are you thinking, Gary? Bite your lip.”

“One. There are several countries up in arms over George’s reaction to those terrorist attacks. They say that the US can’t prove that the Axis of Evil was involved. Two. Even if they were, a lot of people don’t believe that Saudi Arabia was involved. Three. The French introduced a resolution to move the UN from New York to Paris. Four. Since those attacks we made, China has taken over Pakistan and Afghanistan. What if they recovered some of the Pakistani nuclear weapons?”

“The frogs can take the UN and be hanged for all I care. We have bigger problems right here at home, Gar. Washington will be uninhabitable for several years. Where are they going to permanently reconvene the government? Are they going to move Washington DC to Independence, Missouri?”

“There has been talk about that very thing.”

“I heard it, that’s why I asked.”

“Appropriate name, anyway.”

“How much for the 2½ acres?”

“Just what I paid you for it, \$5,000.”

“I’ll write you a check.”

“Don’t you need to talk to Linda about it?”

“We talked the entire trip. We’ve decided to go ahead and start building the home now.”

“Something up? That’s rather sudden.”

“Bob has pancreatic cancer. The doctor gave him 3 months. Johnnie Rae says that she’s going to sell their house and move to Albuquerque when he dies.”

“Sorry. So do you know what you want for a house?”

“Same as we have now except I want the shelter separate. I figured you’d sell me the land and I talked to a contractor. All I have to do is give him the word and he’ll start construction.”

“I’d say only a 3’ fence, right?”

“Right, strong fences make for good neighbors, but you don’t want it so high you can’t see over it and mind your buddy’s business.”

“Welcome to Arizona, the 48th state of the Union. When will he start on the house?”

“Next week. Just as soon as we get the title transferred. I took the liberty of having a realtor draw up these papers.”

“Sharon and I will sign and deposit your check, Ronald. Hip, hip, hooray.”

“Well, Ronald?” Linda asked.

“They start construction next week, Lyn.”

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Ron and Linda planned to spend the weekend, but Johnnie Rae called and said that Robert had taken a turn for the worse. They packed their bags, filled a travel cup with coffee and hit the road. The following Monday morning, the contractor showed up. I passed him on my way to the bank. I cashed Ron’s check at a branch of his bank and took \$5,000 in \$1’s, \$5’s, \$10’s and \$20’s. I stacked the money on a shelf over my workbench intending to use it for household money. It wasn’t so much money that we would lose any interest and it couldn’t hurt to keep a little cash on hand in addition to the gold and silver. We still weren’t flush by any means. Most of my weapons were stolen

from the government. We had the 2 Winchesters, the 3 Rugers and then the guns in the storage room, only 4 of which I'd purchased. Derek had one of the Ruger revolvers.

The food kept building up slowly, it seemed that we were buying 6 months' worth of food every 4 months. We had to replace the food eaten while the kids were here and I had an uneasy feeling that I couldn't put my finger on. Whenever I get an uneasy feeling, something is going to happen and whatever it is won't be good.

Have you ever just sat in your lawn chair and watched them put in a house and shelter? Interesting and I discovered that Ron was making his shelter pretty fancy. One day the construction foreman came up to me and said that his plans called for a tunnel to connect from Ron's shelter to ours. I looked the plans over and led him to my shelter. He took a tape, measured and marked a box on the one end and put an 'X' in the box. That was the new entrance, I presumed. He wanted to know if they could have access and I told him not to drink up all of the booze (since I didn't have any). They brought in a large backhoe and I mean big. It had a reach of at least 25' give or take. They started the tunnel from my end and when they had it cut in, leveled it, poured a slab and started laying block. About a day before the block reached my shelter, they cut the hole and started laying the rest of the block. A steel door was installed in the end of my shelter and I noticed that the lock was on the inside.

It didn't take long to finish off Ron's shelter and one day a semi showed up with the biggest propane tank I ever saw. I had noticed a gas line on the outside of the tunnel and concluded it was time to get the RS 30000. When it was delivered a couple of weeks later from Colorado Standby, the contractor had it installed and one of his electricians wired in the transfer switch. An adjustment was made so that if the output of the solar panel fell below a preset level the generator would kick in. It was also set to exercise itself every fourth Saturday morning. They used a 5-gallon bottle of propane to check it and confirmed that it was ok. They then hooked it into the T from the propane line. I was getting an extra bonus because a plumber, at Ron's behest, installed regular gas pipes where needed.

After everything had settled down before, I'd returned the propane bottles to the dealer and paid for any propane I used. I'd emptied the gas and diesel and parked the tanker in a truck stop. I should have used the last name, Larceny it would have been more appropriate. There was a notice in the paper a few days later thanking the dirty low down thief for returning the tanker. I cut it out and framed it.

"Linda called."

"What's new?"

"Robert died and they have their house on the market. She wanted to know how the new house was coming."

“The shelter is done and the foreman said that aside from a little finish work the inside is almost done. I’ll call Ron and let him know and extend my condolences.”

“Ron, Gary. Please accept my sympathies.”

“It was the darnest thing. You know what the pain is like, right? He had a heart attack from the pain and died. Johnnie Rae has already sold their house and has a mover coming in about 10 days. How is our house coming?”

“The shelter is finished except for installing the generator. Did you order a new transfer panel? Anyway the house is done and painted and they’re just finishing some wood-work.”

“We’re leaving the 100-amp transfer panel and putting in a 200-amp panel. We accepted an offer this evening. I’m going to hang around and make sure it’s ready for the new owners. Linda is coming with our furniture as quickly as we can get a mover. We financed the construction with a construction loan and I’d like to pay it off as soon as possible. We had enough money so that we only needed to finance about 30% of the construction. With the money from our home, we’re going to be in good shape. I could have paid cash but that would have meant selling my Krugerrands and the price of gold is down a little at the moment.”

“I hate to tell you but I’ve got that sinking feeling, again.”

“Have you been watching the news?”

“No. I’ve been busy supervising the construction of your new home.”

“Oh no. Doesn’t the sign say labor is \$20 an hour and \$30 an hour if you watch.”

“Something like that. Winston Tire?”

“Yeah, on Palmdale Boulevard.”

“Do you ever miss the Palmdale Group?”

“About as much as I miss having cancer.”

“Yeah, me too.” (Same stuff, different day, all of the time.)

Three weeks later Linda showed up and a semi wasn’t far behind. They had bought the complete move package and that meant setting up the beds, etc. so Linda was pretty busy that day. We had her for dinner and Sharon and she made plans to go to Costco in Prescott the following day. She said she needed a few things and I told them to take the Chevy. I also told her to fill up her tank when she needed and write down how much she took on the clipboard in the box. We could settle up whenever I needed to refill the

tanks. I should have sent the trailer; it took them 2 days going to Costco to get everything they wanted. Sharon paid with cash, the cash from the shelf in the storage room. I told her that was our emergency money and when she had a chance she had to replace it.

Ron showed up about 10 days later. I kidded him about waiting until Linda had everything done. He had spent most of the 10 days cleaning their house and it wasn't dirty to begin with. The contractor had been out and installed their generator and they were pretty well settled in. Ron and I spent several days putting in a concrete block wall in his shelter and hiding it. Now he had a gun room/hideaway too.

You know what it's like when some kids call their parents, right? You feel like saying, "Cut the conversation, how much?" Damon had burned through his money and I told him to get a job. I sent him \$500. Amy was a little behind and needed money and she got \$500. Lorrie wanted a grand and she got \$500. I sent Derek \$500 just even things out. He called to thank me and ask what the money was for. I told him, "A while." It turned out they needed the money anyway. We visited a while and I told him to go sharpen Rambo II, there was trouble brewing.

"What is happening?"

"If I knew, I'd tell you. I just have this sinking feeling, again."

"When was the last time you got it?"

"Shortly before the terrorists set off those bombs."

"Anything else new?"

"Ron and Linda built a house next to ours. He got in yesterday."

"I thought he was living near his brother in Cedar Hill."

"Robert died. He had pancreatic cancer and the pain caused a fatal heart attack. Johnnie Rae sold the house and moved to Albuquerque."

"That pain must really be bad if it can cause a heart attack."

"Derek, I kid you not. It is more painful than childbirth according to most women who have had it and have had babies and can compare the pain. Childbirth gets over. Pancreatic pain doesn't and it can kill you. It's a dull pain that is so intense you can't explain it."

"You used to have it right?"

“Yeah but the next time I get it, I’m going to join Elizabeth. Why do you think my medicine box looks like a drugstore? The standard treatment is NPO and pain medication.”

We’re soldiers; but we’re American soldiers. We’ve been kickin’ butts for 200 years. We’re 11 and 1. (I added the 1st Gulf War)

Where is your drill sergeant, men?

Blown up sir.

Where have you been soldier?

Training, sir.

“What kind of training?”

Army training, sir.

“Are you telling me that you men finished your training on your own?”

That’s a fact, Jack. (Stripes)

You can’t get through life without a little humor. I’m not much for that crap on TV they call sitcoms, but every once in a great while something like Stripes comes along. I wouldn’t normally watch this bunch of comedians on TV. But, Bill Murray had a string of pretty funny films. My favorite was Ghostbusters. I got to laugh and gawk at Sigourney Weaver at the same time. There is something about that woman... Do you know what I mean, fellas?

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“If you’re so convinced that the crap is going to hit the fan, we’d better build a shooting range.”

“Where?”

“We’ll put it on the property line where we didn’t put in the fence.”

“Sounds fair to me, what distance?”

“Just for you Gar-Bear, 600-yards.”

“I don’t know if I can even see 600-yards.”

“Wear your reading glasses and use a scope.”

“Does that work?”

“If it doesn’t take them off.”

“Yeah, huh? Say, did you ever sight in your M16A3’s?”

“Robert and I sighted them in using his basement range, but they need to be sighted in properly.”

“What range did you sight them in at?”

“About 15 yards, but we used the sighting in setting.”

“That’s for 25 meters, I think. I never had a chance to sight mine in. We’ll put up a back-stop and we can do the military weapons first.”

Bankrupt – Chapter 5

One other thing that I should mention; as manufactured, the BM59 Tri-comp will not fit on any M14 rifle. That's the word from Reese Surplus, folks. I wonder if a competent gunsmith with a lathe could figure out how to manufacture a similar tri-comp that would fit on a M14 rifle? The word is that the compensator sold by Fulton Armory might do the job, my thanks to A Friend for the information. Remember it's only fiction, but when you screw the pooch, you ought to mention it as soon as you find out. Dang! Go ahead, I have my cast iron drawers on. My name is Gary, not Jesus.

It was definitely jacket weather and we had 34 M16's to sight in. It turned out that if one of us sighted a weapon in, the other could use it as is. That made the task simpler and we had all 34 sighted in a week from the time the range was done. Ron hired the contractor to push some dirt and we had a pretty nice range. Geraldo, I've got some good news for you, you're safe. At 500-yards with the Super Match, I couldn't do any better. Robert had left his entire gun collection to Ron. I had trouble with the breathing. Hell, we both did, wheeze, wheeze, cough, gimme another smoke. (See I'm doing my bit to get people to stop smoking, LOL.)

On a bad day, it was a toss-up who was going to croak first, wheezer one or wheezer two. Ron said something about turning up his oxygen level to 3 liters. Man did I get in his face. When you need to do that, hang up your gun belt. He got the construction loan paid off and bought a Ruger and Winchester rifle just like mine. There were 6 stalls in the pole barn so I gave him space and they bought some Morgan's too. People like Ron, Linda and Sharon need a Morgan for the exact same reason Dan Blocker needed a Morgan on Bonanza. Sharon rode Ralph I rode Alice. Ron and Linda named their horses Norton and Trixie although they were both mares. Ralph was a very happy horse.

We needed a hired man, part time. Ron went looking and found a semi-retired horse wrangler/ranch hand. That man was a whiz with horses. We ended up buying a reproduction stagecoach and giving the ladies rides. Because of my numb hands, Ron was the driver and I rode shotgun with my Saiga 12K. It might not have been authentic, but what the hell, what's the use of using a double barrel that you have to buy when you already have a perfectly good 8 shooter + 1 in the pipe? The wrangler's name was Bert. Bert only wanted paid in cash at the end of the week. He also wanted Monday's off, for some peculiar reason, we suspected to get over his hangover. You can always tell, you know. I replaced the 590A1 so I had a shotgun not hidden away.

Bert didn't bring it to work and it wasn't any of our business. He worked Tuesday morning through noon Saturday. He'd take his cash, tip his hat and say 'Thankee'. He looked to be 60, but one day Ron and he were visiting and he turned out to be only 43. Bert had a pension from Desert Storm. He mumbled something about Gulf Syndrome one day. The latest studies seem to show that our ammunition may be responsible for Gulf Syndrome. How depleted is that uranium, is the question. Vietnam taught us all about

Delayed Stress and WW II & I, battle shock. Maybe the bullets should be more depleted, huh?

There are as many theories about the Gulf Syndrome as there are different opinions about anything. 11 out of 10 people will tell you that depleted uranium can't hurt you. Fine, what do I know? When did we start using large volumes of depleted uranium shells? In military applications, when alloyed, Depleted Uranium [DU] is ideal for use in armor penetrators. These solid metal projectiles have the speed, mass and physical properties to perform exceptionally well against armored targets. DU provides a substantial performance advantage, well above other competing materials. This allows DU penetrators to defeat an armored target at a significantly greater distance. Also, DU's density and physical properties make it ideal for use as armor plate. DU has been used in weapon systems for many years in both applications.

Depleted uranium results from the enriching of natural uranium for use in nuclear reactors. Natural uranium is a slightly radioactive metal that is present in most rocks and soils as well as in many rivers and seawater. Natural uranium consists primarily of a mixture of two isotopes (forms) of uranium, Uranium-235 (U235) and Uranium-238 (U238), in the proportion of about 0.7 and 99.3 percent, respectively. Nuclear reactors require U235 to produce energy; therefore, the natural uranium has to be enriched to obtain the isotope U235 by removing a large part of the U238. Uranium-238 becomes DU, which is 0.7 times as radioactive as natural uranium. Since DU has a half-life of 4.5 billion years, there is very little decay of those DU materials.

The Department of Defense announced today the release of a RAND scientific literature review that indicates no evidence of harmful health effects directly linked to depleted uranium exposures at levels experienced by Gulf War veterans.

The report, "A Review of the Scientific Literature as it Pertains to Gulf War Illnesses: Volume 7 Depleted Uranium," is the latest report commissioned by the office of the special assistant for Gulf War illnesses. The report responds to veterans' concerns that depleted uranium might be the cause of some of their illnesses.

The report states that there are no peer reviewed published reports of detectable increases of cancer or other negative health effects from radiation exposure to inhaled or ingested natural uranium at levels far exceeding those likely in the Gulf. This is mainly because the body is very effective at eliminating ingested and inhaled uranium and because the low radioactivity of natural or depleted uranium means that the mass of uranium needed for significant internal exposure is virtually impossible to obtain. Large variations in exposure to radioactivity from natural uranium in the normal environment have not been associated with negative health effects.

Exposure to uranium at high doses can cause kidney problems. However, no increase in kidney disease has been observed in relatively large occupational populations chronically exposed to natural uranium at concentrations above normal ambient levels. Researchers at the Baltimore VA Medical Center are following the group of Gulf War Vet-

erans with the greatest exposure to depleted uranium, veterans with embedded fragments. Although these individuals have an array of health problems, many of which are related to their combat injuries, researchers say “To date no manifestations of kidney disease attributable to the chemical toxicity of depleted uranium have been found; neither do these individuals appear to have manifestations attributable to radiation effects.”

RAND is a nonprofit institution with a long history of independent research. RAND had experts review the literature, including Dr. Naomi Harley, an authority on radiation physics, Dr. Ernest Foulkes, a heavy metal toxicologist, and Dr. Lee Hilborne, a pathologist. Their review encompassed literature relating to both radiation and heavy metal toxicity risks published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals, books, government publications and conference proceedings.

I swear sometimes people think I just make all of this stuff up. I don't. Do you see the problem? The study starts off with an assumption. Exposure to uranium at high doses can cause kidney problems. Then they add to it with a half-truth: Large variations in exposure to radioactivity from natural uranium in the normal environment have not been associated with negative health effects. Large variations in exposure to radioactivity from natural uranium in the normal environment haven't not been associated with negative health effects. I added “n't” and defy you to prove me wrong. The bottom line is that radiation wasn't believed to be as dangerous as it later turned out to be, in the 1930's either. Anyone can manipulate the facts. It is only my opinion and what do I know? Sometimes I wonder why people have heads, just to hold their hats up. How much did the MILITARY pay for THAT study? They most certainly got the result they wanted, didn't they? Always remember who signs the checks. But, the study sounds good, doesn't it? Don't form an opinion, instead think about it. That Chobham II armor? Invented by the US using DU!

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“How do you want to go about sighting in the machine guns?”

“Ronald, were going to use Tracer on Target (TOT). The TOT method is the easiest method of adjustment for the machine gun crew. The gunner walks the strike of the round onto the target, then fires a killing burst. TOT is extremely effective against stationary targets. To use the TOT method, the gunner fires an initial burst, observes the strike of the round in relation to the target, fires a second long burst while simultaneously moving the weapon until the rounds impact on the target, and then fires a killing burst until the target is destroyed.”

“We can also use the Burst on Target (BOT) method. The BOT method is the fastest method of adjustment. The gunner moves the strike of the round to the target by adjusting the sight picture. BOT is primarily used with the MK 19 machine gun. To use the BOT method, the gunner fires his sensing rounds or burst, observes the strike of the round while maintaining his initial point of aim, makes the adjustments to his point of

aim necessary to move the strike of the round to the target, and then fires a killing burst. The gunner continues to adjust and fire killing bursts until the target is destroyed.”

“On the M240B, we’ll use a 6- to 9-round killing burst. We’ll suppress the area with 20- to 30-round bursts, (searching, traversing, or Z-pattern method). On the Ma Deuce, we’ll use a 5- to 7-round killing burst. We’ll suppress the area with 10- to 15-round bursts (searching, traversing, or Z-pattern method). On the Mk-19, we use a 1- to 2-round sensing burst and then we’ll suppress the area with 6-round bursts. That’s from FM 17-12-8, Chapter 6. It’s all out there Ronald; all you have to do is be able to read.”

“Well I can read; if I have the books.”

“You can’t have the Library of Congress, even if there was one, on your computer. When you have the Internet, you have access to most everything you want to know, except the truth. That’s a little harder to find.”

“What is the truth, Gar-Bear?”

“The truth is I’ll be 65 on my next birthday, if I live that long. Everything else they tell us is a lie. We took military belted ammo from Barstow, right? It is mixed 4 ball or armor piercing to one tracer or APIT round. Now that stuff we got for the M240 and the M16’s may use a dim tracer. You only see the trace of the bullet through night vision devices. We’ll have to check the ammo cans and find out which tracer ammo we have.”

“Which weapon for which purpose?”

“I’ll give you a web link. Go read Army Field Manual 17-12-8 on the web. The topic is Light Cavalry Gunnery. It covers all three of the machine guns we have. It tells you how to adjust the sights and the whole nine yards.”

“Can I eat popcorn and drink a soda while I read the book?”

“No. You’ll get it in your keyboard. There will be a quiz in one week.”

o

“I want to use the Ma Deuce.”

“Why?”

“It sort of goes chugga, chugga.”

“What did the book say about that?”

“I don’t know.”

“Why not, I told you there’d be a quiz?”

“I spilled my soda in my keyboard and it took me 2 hours to clean it up.”

“See. Look Ron just go to Chapter 2 and look up the table titled, “Weapons Systems Characteristics. Better yet, I’ll go there myself and print out the entire FM, but only if you promise to read it.”

“Thanks.”

“There will be a quiz in 7 days in the morning with the practical exam that afternoon.”

“What if I don’t pass?”

“Then you’ll be the target.”

“Asshole.”

“You do love me. Do you know how long it’s been since you called me by my name?”

o

The thing about the money was that there were more demands on our fragile budget than it could sometimes bear. If we hadn’t put in the solar a few panels and a few batteries at a time, we would have never had electricity. We still had days during the winter when our available energy was far less than we needed. Thank God for those storage batteries. I rigged a circuit based on the circuit the electrician had added to the generator only set to a higher level. When our power resource dwindled to a certain point, we started shutting things down. With the generator, we weren’t nearly at as much risk as before, but generators can be expensive to operate. When the old-fashioned doorbell ringer went off, we began implement a staged shut down. Occasionally, during the winter or on an especially gloomy day, we were forced to let the generator run. It mostly depended on the forecast. If it was a short-term thing, I manually bypassed the automatic transfer switch.

If it were a longer-term event, I let the batteries drain to a second point where a buzzer came on. Then I kicked in the generator, recharged the batteries and shut it back down. More than one morning I woke up to fully charged batteries because the generator had kicked in sometime during the night and I didn’t hear the ringer or buzzer. They weren’t really loud enough to wake us at night because I hung a heavy bag over them after losing a little too much sleep. It worked and the rule is: if it isn’t broke, don’t fix it.

I had learned to bank the fireplace and generally had coals in the morning. Since moving to Arizona we got up early and retired early, just like the old time farmers. I was still harvesting deadfalls but I was cutting them in place and then throwing them in the truck. I kept a 2-cord cushion, generally the greenest wood. It was extra work but much more

efficient fires. Sharon admitted that it was hard enough cooking on the propane stove so I never suggested a wood-burning kitchen stove. Besides, I would be 65 on my next birthday and was slower now than I had been when I was 60, a lot slower. I tried to keep a pile of dry hardwood with a large diameter to use as the final log of the night.

The news on the TV channels wasn't good. The election would be John McCain against John Kerry. Still the election was months away so I didn't concentrate on it. Listening to the rhetoric gave me a headache. I could have mailed in my ballot that very day, I considered it a no contest election. Plus McCain was leading in the polls by about 8-10%.

Refilling the gasoline and diesel was another matter. Ron's Hummer averaged about 15 mpg around the area and better on the road. Linda's car and our Chevy pickup used gas. I could hardly wait for the next war so I could borrow another Hummer. I must have had a mental lapse and forgotten about God's sense of humor. War clouds were building over Europe, again. It was those flippin' Frenchmen, again. Hasher said 35 independence days or something close. Why was becoming more obvious by the moment.

Having abandoned much of New England, the people simply moved south from New England and north from southern California. The Texans just moved to a different part of Texas and set up shop. Congress was funding a study for an efficient method to extract those trillion barrels of oil in the oil shale. American was beginning to lose some of the richest farmland in the country. The final death count from the activities of those terrorists came in at 15 million dead in the first month and 10 million more dying. It was impossible to really estimate the deaths indirectly attributed to the radiation because it came in terms of higher cancer rates, etc.

o

Clarence and Shirley had no reason to leave Alabama – Birmingham was home to them. However Clarence had a longing to see Ron and Gary. Ron had called to tell him their new location and give him their cell phone number. Ron had extended a standing invitation to visit any time, announced or unannounced. He told Clarence when he came to bring his weapons because they had a range. Weapons were almost a misnomer. Clarence had a 12-gauge shotgun, a .22 rifle and a .38 revolver. Clarence wasn't really into the military hardware or Winchester Africans. When he was in the service, he carried an M14 rifle, letting you know when he was in. Clarence dearly loved his M14 and was a little saddened when the military went to the M16. Luckily he'd been out before that ever happened.

Clarence had missed Vietnam too, getting out in 1964 before the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Thus he wasn't a Vietnam era vet. As integrated as the services claimed to be in the early '60's, sometimes Clarence wondered if that were really so. Clarence was just Clarence and he happened to be Black. Everyone has to be something. Ron had warned Clarence that if he came in the winter to bring warm clothing, about the same that he would wear in Palmdale.

Mayer is located in Yavapai County, Arizona. As of the 2000 census, the CDP had a total population of 1,408. Mayer is located at 34°25'9" North, 112°14'59" West (34.419154, -112.249779). According to the US Census Bureau, the CDP has a total area of 52.0 km² (20.1 mi²). 100% of it is land and none of it is covered by water. The elevation of Mayer area runs between 4,300' and 4,500'. The town is located in the foothills of the Bradshaw Mountains near Big Bug Creek. The 1.2 million acre Prescott National Forest is just to the west of town. Mayer is an unincorporated town that draws many individuals to its cool mountain setting. The town sits at an elevation of 4,370 feet. The climate is mild all year round with a winter low temperature of 23 degrees and summer high temperature of 85 degrees.

Joseph Mayer came to the area in 1881. He built a store and a saloon. Later, he established a Wells Fargo stage station. The station was built along the line between Phoenix and Prescott. After a period of time, the town was named after him.

Clarence and Shirley decided to visit Ron and Gary. He tried to call but people with cell phones don't always leave them on. He left a voice mail indicating that they were on their way and when they had everything packed, they headed west. Clarence then drove to Little Rock, where he picked up I-40. Once on I-40, they followed Ron's directions of going west to Flagstaff, south on I-17, etc. His odometer said it was 1,655 miles when they arrived in Mayer.

James and Clarence Jr. had moved to northern California, Redding. I'll remind you where everyone was at this point in time: Derek was in Flippin, AR; Damon was in Mason City, IA; Mark and Paula were in Austin, MN; Jennifer and Ronnie Joe and Brenda, et. al., in Ft. Smith, AR; and, John and Kevin were MIA. (John was in San Francisco and was fine. Kevin had gone into diabetic shock and had died. He was listed as John Doe #2007-311 on the Coroner's records.) David and Lorrie plus Johnnie Rae were Albuquerque, NM and Amy and her kids were in Denver, CO.

The Three Amigos, back when they were still The Three Amigos, had a standing rule for the families to gather in the event of trouble. Now you understand that every time a bomb went off, all of the kids ended up wherever The Three Amigos were. Linda hadn't heard from her sister since the LA bombing. When Ron and Linda moved to Cedar Hill, Linda executed a limited Power of Attorney for her sister and let her sister handle their rental property. After the bombing, Linda called and was told that the property was too radioactive to be occupied, thus ending her stream of rental payments, some \$5,000 a month.

Ron and Linda had actually made money on the move to Arizona, even after the moving expenses. Their home in Cedar Hill was in an upscale neighborhood and it sold very well. The new home was the same plan, but even with increased building costs making the home cost more, and the difference in the land value was significant. The difference in the land value was about \$100,000 and they were about \$80,000 ahead. Plus, Ron had saved money on the lid of the shelter; 10' underground, it didn't require 1' of concrete.

The contractor had looked at the arrangement I had to close for my shelter and suggested I'd done it wrong. He offered to rework it and make it the same as Ron's. I had a 1½" thick cover made from 2 pieces of ¾" road plate. Even spring loaded, it was a bear to move. After, with the new hydraulic cylinders and the springs, it was easy. Well, sometimes, I'm stupid. He also installed a blast door at the door into the shelter, replacing the regular steel door, which he used on the tunnel. Finally, he installed an air purification system like what Ron had and it only cost about half what the LUWA system cost. It was all on Ron and Linda, he explained. They told him they'd add the cost to the cost of their home and get the money back when they sold. I like free, it's the best price in town. When you think about it, Ron wasn't necessarily being generous. Our shelters were connected together via a 500' tunnel. My air should be every bit as pure as his.

o

"Clarence, long time," I greeted my friend.

"Gary, you're looking good. Lost some weight?"

"15 pounds, it ain't easy being a cripple and trying to act like Daniel Boone. I fixed that cabin up all by myself, partner. Even took a tranquilizer and installed the solar panels on the roof. I harvest my own firewood, tend garden in the summer and steal guns from the military every time there's a war."

"Same stuff, different day?"

"Exactly."

"How have you been?" Ron asked.

"Poorly. It's mostly the diabetes. I haven't had any more heart trouble worth talking about."

"You're in Birmingham?"

"About 20 miles west, yes."

"You and Shirley stay with Linda and me, Clarence. Gary and Sharon don't have much room in their cabin. How's the family?"

"The boys moved to Redding, north of Sacramento on I-5. My sister was in the Valley the day the terrorists set off that stinking bomb."

"Sorry, Clarence," I said, "Great lady. She kept a nice house."

“Palmdale got one hell of a dose of radiation, you know. It’s nothing but a danged ghost town. We couldn’t even go back and clean out her apartment. Nice homes. I don’t see any bomb shelters, but that has to be the biggest propane tank I think I’ve ever seen.”

“45,000-gallon capacity and 250psi,” Ron explained. “Bought it used and had it moved and recertified. I guess we’re up to about 20,000-gallons of propane at the moment.”

“What kind of area is this?”

“High chaparral, mostly. The National Forest is a mile or two west and that’s where I get the firewood. I had to pull a permit,” I explained. “We’re just short of a mile high here, maybe 4,500 feet. It takes a little while to adjust to the elevation. You’ll see a wrangler around the place, his name is Bert.”

“I didn’t notice a bunk house.”

“Bert lives in town. He’s one of us, but he doesn’t know it. Darn good with horses, though.”

“Do you have horses? Which one is Salina? This I’ve got to see.”

“The horses are named Ralph and Alice plus Norton and Trixie. Norton is a mare. I don’t know what Ron named the other three.”

“Bert said that their names were Star, Scout and Diablo.”

“No cattle roaming the range?”

“Ron, did you talk to Bert about getting that pregnant cow and feeder cattle?”

“He said he’d take care of it. He recommended that we find 4 yearling cattle plus the cow. One of them could be a bull calf out of a different line. Apparently they’ll be delivered on Thursday. I’ll set some steak out to thaw for dinner,” Ron suggested. “Let’s get your luggage out of your car and put it in your room. Gary and I have something to show you, right Gar-Bear?”

“Right.”

◦

“Your shelter is bigger than Gary’s.”

“I was bankrupt when I built it or immediately thereafter, Clarence. I did what I could. By the way, if you hear of anyone talking about Mary and John Lazarus, that’s Sharon and me. After we went broke in California and lost everything, we ended up living here under assumed names until we could get everything straightened out. We couldn’t change

horses in the middle of the stream, so everyone around here knows us as John and Mary. Anyway, we saved the best for last. Pump the pump, Ron.”

“Jesus H. Christ. Are those some of the guns the government is looking for?”

“Yeah, we went to Barstow. Ron has 2 complete sets. His late brother Robert had the same as he and I had and at the time we even had M1114 Hummers.”

“Nice. Is this your hideaway from Sharon?”

“Precisely. One of these days when I’m not looking, she’ll probably sneak down to the shelter, slide the reefer back in place and drop it. I have a couple of cases of MRE’s, a couple of cases of water and all of my cartons of cigarettes, just in case. Wait until you see Ronald’s little storage room.”

After we walked back to Ron’s shelter using the connecting tunnel and moved Ron’s refrigerator, Clarence said:

“God, Ron you really do have double of everything. I brought my guns like you asked; they’re in the trunk of the car.”

“I put in solar power, too Clarence. My battery bank is the same size as Gary’s and stores 20,000-amp hours. We both have RS 30000 backup generators, just in case. Gary says that when it snows we might lose electrical power from the solar.”

“Mutt and Jeff; Mutt lives in the cabin and Jeff in the big house,” Clarence laughed.

“How long can you stay?”

“We don’t want to wear out our welcome. Maybe a week tops. They have any AA meetings in Mayer?”

“Never looked, Clarence. Wherever two or more are gathered...”

“I’ll tell you what Clarence,” Ron said, “We’ll do some shooting tomorrow and we can give you a ride in our stage coach and ride up to the forest the day after.”

o

The week before Clarence and Shirley showed up...

“Darn it, Bert told me that the horses were for sale, but not for rent, Lyn.”

“It couldn’t hurt to have more mares, Ron. Are they Morgan’s?”

“Yes and they come with the tack.”

“Tell Bert to buy the horses and ride them until they’re gentled down.”

“Are you sure? They’re not inexpensive.”

“Are you questioning me and my judgment?”

“Yes, dear. I mean no, dear.”

Bankrupt – Chapter 6

I had missed Sharon not having a Ruger and bought another Vaquero in Flagstaff. Ron had not only gotten himself the Ruger and Winchester, he'd also gotten a Winchester and Ruger for Linda. We had talked it over and had decided that if TSHTF, Bert would be better off in our shelters than in Mayer. Ron doesn't have any problem keeping booze in his house and he had a couple of cases of half pints of Jim Beam tucked away in his storage room. We had taken Sharon along and I bought Bert the Ruger and gun belt with holster and Ron bought him the Winchester. With 3 more horses and livestock to feed, we'd ordered enough feed for at least a year and stacked it around the pole barn.

Given the weather, the cattle wouldn't really need to be in shelter, but Bert built an addition onto the pole barn large enough to handle the cattle and it was done long before he got the cattle. That was why I had brought up the issue of the cow and the feeder cattle. As usual, Ron was way ahead of me. The pole barn was actually big enough to build 6 horse stalls on the other side, so Bert had put in 6 more. Some of the mares were expectant mothers.

We hadn't tried hogs or poultry. It was easier to buy pork and chickens by the case at Costco. The way the money thing worked, what with us being poor was: Every time we got a big distribution from the Trust Fund, we make a trip to Costco and load up on all the food we had room for and then buy the other things we wanted. The only utility bill we had was the cell phone bill and we did that by buying time cards in Mayer and adding the time to the phone. I don't consider gas, diesel or propane utilities. We didn't use enough propane that it really mattered and we were working on topping off that danged depot sized tank anyway.

Chevron came by every month and topped off the diesel and gas. I'd add PRI-G and PRI-D according to how much fuel was added. In all the time we'd been in Arizona, we'd only put about 10,000 miles on the Chevy pickup. I had a set of spare tires, belts and hoses plus a spare set of ignition parts. This year I hadn't felt up to harvesting timber. I had enough to last another year, but when Ron and Linda moved in, he had a fella in Mayer deliver 5 cords of wood for their fireplace and 2 for mine. I reimbursed him on the wood. On the 15th of the month, we'd sit down and pay the bills and divide the costs. Then one or the other of us, usually Sharon, would write a check. Usually Sharon because we were splitting the cost of the 3,000-gallons of propane Ron was having delivered every month. Let me tell you, we were broke most of the time.

However, let me also tell you that being broke is just a temporary financial condition. I said 20,000-gallons of propane because the tank contained 21,000-gallons purchased less whatever we had used. Ron said that he intended to fill it to the 39,000-gallon level, minimum and perhaps all the way up to 40,500-gallons or 90% of capacity. Running 2 RS 30000's at maximum load 24 hours a day would burn 4.8 gallons per hour. At full power, we had 8,437.5 hours of propane for the generators or about 351 days, less whatever we used for the stove and dryers. Remember, we generated our own electrici-

ty and it just made sense to have electric water heaters. In fact, I had an opportunity to get Sharon a new stove through Ron's contractor and we even had a new electric stove. The LP dryer hadn't worked out so well, being in the shelter, and we'd given it to Amy and replaced it with an electric dryer. No wonder we were always broke.

◦

Ron and Linda had an all-electric home. My automatic transfer panel was the 200-amp version in case you're wondering. I had a third inverter too, or did I mention that? My computer calculator tells me that $30,000 \text{ watts} \div \text{by } 120 \text{ volts} = 250 \text{ amps}$. I almost never turned on the third inverter. $20,000 \text{ watts} \div \text{by } 120 \text{ volts} = 167 \text{ amps}$. You cannot convert watts to amps, since watts are power and amps are coulombs per second (like converting apples to miles). If you have at least two of the following three: amps, volts and watts then the missing one can be calculated. Since watts are amps multiplied by volts, there is a simple relationship between them. However, in some engineering disciplines the volts are more or less fixed, for example in house wiring, automotive wiring, or telephone wiring. In these limited fields they often have charts that relate amps to watts and this has confused people. What these charts should be titled is "conversion of amps to watts at a fixed voltage of 120 volts" or "conversion of watts to amps at 13.8 volts," etc. I tidy up the loose ends as I go.

Ron must have worked on Clarence and Linda on Shirley. All of a sudden, Clarence was talking about moving to Arizona. Clarence wasn't rich like our old pal, Ronald. They would have to sell their home in Alabama before they could build a home in Arizona. Ron and I talked it over and figured they could build a home halfway between the two of ours. However, Ron and Linda also had another idea and just because Clarence and Shirley couldn't build the home yet, there was nothing to keep Ron from putting in a third shelter and pouring the slab for Clarence and Shirley's home. Clarence had apparently told Ron that he was going to build a home just like his and Linda's.

I drug out 2 lawn chairs and Ron and I both supervised the installation of Clarence's shelter. Clarence's shelter would be perpendicular to the two of ours and connected to the same tunnel. It made his shelter a little cheaper and it didn't really need the third entrance, but it had one. So, Ron had the contractor put in the wall while he was at it. Poured, not block like ours were. He even bought a used supermarket refrigerator for Clarence like ours. Ron told the dealer in Flagstaff to get in the 40 solar panels and 100 200-amp batteries. I was beginning to believe that Ron and I had paid for the dealer's vacation home. After the contractor was done, Ron and I set up the refrigerator with the casters and hydraulic pump. I was getting good at it by this time. Ron transferred Robert's weapons from Barstow to Clarence's storage room and I picked up a used gun rack we mounted on the wall for the M16's. We went to some garage sales and got some used shelving and assembled it in Clarence's hideout.

"Gar-Bear, Lyn and I talked it over and we can either put Clarence and Shirley at our place or they can sleep in their shelter while their home is being built."

“Why did you buy him a generator? We have enough capacity in each of ours to run 3 shelters with no problem.”

“I was thinking about 2 things. The first was winter and the second was that having 2 extra generators would be better than having one extra generator. I talked to Bert and he’s getting the harnesses so we can use a 6 team pull on the stagecoach.”

“Is he training all of the horses?”

“Ralph doesn’t like the harness very much. He’s continuing to train the mares.”

“Ralph should be a happy camper having 6 mares in his herd.”

“He’s going to have some competition, you know. With 6 mares in foal, we’re bound to get more stallions.”

“With 6 mares in foal we’re going to run out of room in the pole barn, Ron. There are only 12 stalls in the barn and that lean-to that Bert built looks rickety to me.”

“Do you think that we should extend it?”

“It couldn’t cost too much. I think maybe we ought to double the size. If we don’t have enough hay to go around it twice and cover the roof, we’ll buy more.”

“Suits me. Why did you want to go to Flagstaff?”

“Wearing 2 Vaqueros is getting to be a little much. I called the dealer and had him get me a regular gun belt and a single holster. It’s a clone of that rig that John Wayne always wore. I also ordered a double barreled shotgun.”

“Oh? What kind?”

“I read on the forum in a story about the Stoeger 12 gauge Coach guns and surfed the web. They’re about \$380 for the blued model with the blued receiver and don’t have hammers, but they have the look of the original coach guns except for the hammers.”

“What about that 12K of yours?”

“What about it? It’s in the gun rack in the shelter. It isn’t going anywhere and now that we’ll look more like a real stagecoach, I figured what the hell and bought one.”

“Once these colts are old enough to ride, we’ll get Bert to break them to saddle and ride them instead of the mares. I ran into a fella in Mayer who said something about our putting our stagecoach into the next Independence Day parade. What do you think? Should we do it?”

“I’m game if we have another Independence Day parade, sure.”

“Why wouldn’t we have another parade?”

“Have you been watching the news?”

o

That stopped the questions, quickly. The news wasn’t getting any better and the price of gold was headed back up. The French had another factory turning out the Leclerc tanks. The French also field the AMX 30, over 2,000 of them with their 105mm gun. I think I told you, but when they were developing the Abrams tanks, 4 models were developed. They are currently known as the Abrams, Challenger, Leopard and the Leclerc. Each country took a different model, but all use the same 120mm gun, made by the Germans. They also use the British Chobham armor. Obviously, if anyone is going to have an advantage, it will come from upgrading the armor or improving the shells. The Germans were waiting on their latest generation shell back in 2005. The US has the best ammo. The Challenger is the best-protected tank because its armor is 2nd generation using DU and developed for the Abrams. The Germans went to a 55 caliber 120mm cannon, improving their range to 5,500 meters.

Updated M1 tanks have extra layers of steel and depleted uranium that supplement the Chobham-style armor. This combination will hold up to any tank round and most missiles (the powerful Hellfire missile is a notable exception). More importantly, the M256 cannon has a stronger breech than the German gun. Thus, US 120mm ammo is capable of a range of 5,000 meters. The ammunition for the 120mm gun is manufactured in Iowa at the Iowa Ammunition Plant. The Iowa Ammunition plant is located in Middletown, Iowa, just a few miles west of Burlington, which is on the Mississippi River.

No doubt if the US ever goes to a M1A3, they will probably continue to use 2nd generation Chobham armor, but whether or not we’ll ever switch to the new German gun remains to be seen. Derek and I got in an argument over the only naval gun in the US inventory. I said 5”, 54-caliber; he said 105mm, 38-caliber. All of you sailors are familiar with the Mk 45 5” (~127mm) 54-caliber gun, right? I learned that the Ticonderoga is a Cruiser in name only since its displacement is 9,957 tons. Classical definitions make a Cruiser over 10,000 tons. I had in mind the Des Moines class Cruiser that came in at 20,933 tons. The Ticonderoga class is a guided missile cruiser. They aren’t much longer than the Arleigh Burke Guided Missile Destroyer or the Long Oliver Hazard Perry class frigate. The Burke has a displacement of 9,217 tons and the Perry a displacement of 4,100 tons. The length of the 3 vessel classes is: 567’, 513’ and 453’.

You’re going to have to forgive an old man, but this old man is old school. The idea of a Cruiser not being much bigger than a Destroyer bothers me. The idea of a Cruiser not having 8” or bigger guns bothers me. If it were up to this old man, the Iowa would be sporting a rebuilt #2 turret and all 4 of the Iowa class battlewagons would be commissioned. I’m not disputing that a Ticonderoga class guided missile Cruiser isn’t every bit

as powerful as one of its older relatives. What I am suggesting is that there simply is nothing to replace naval gunfire.

Derek said it didn't matter if the German's had a 55-caliber gun and we had a 44-caliber gun. He had no idea what the caliber of the cannon on the Abrams was. He kept saying 120mm. That would be an awful danged short barrel. When he finally understood what I wanted to know, he gave me a Tech Manual number. It isn't me they're going to be shooting at Derek, I could care.

Then we discussed the French and their Leclerc. In a head-to-head confrontation between the Germans and the French, the French would lose, again. Everyone can get off cannon rounds faster than the French with their auto loader. More isn't necessarily better. Apparently, bigger isn't better either. With Bush as President and Rumsfeld as SECDEF, we aren't likely to see the Navy recommission the Iowa class battlewagons either. Those Admirals want more, not bigger. A Ticonderoga class guided missile cruiser carries a few missiles. How many 16" shells does an Iowa class battlewagon carry? On 8 February 1984, New Jersey fired almost 300 shells at Druze and Syrian positions in the Bekka Valley east of Beirut.

The war continued as Allied air superiority continued to dominate the demoralized Iraqi army. In February 1991, Missouri fired her 16-inch guns – the first firing of her guns in anger since the Korean conflict in the 1950s. Firing at targets just north of Khafji, Saudi Arabia, the ship assisted shore-based ground units in their tasks. Missouri shared gunnery duties with USS Wisconsin and the two battleships continued to hammer at their targets with 16-inch gunnery. Near the end of the month, Missouri turned her big guns on Faylaka Island and Kuwait City in support of the ground offensive. Iraq agreed to a cease-fire agreement on 28 February 1991. Why not repair the #2 turret on the Iowa and refit all of the battlewagons' 5" guns with 6" guns like the Wisconsin? Then you could add Harpoons and Tomahawks to your heart's content. We can't do that – it makes too much sense.

The Air Force stopped flying the SR-71 because each mission costs about \$350,000. How much was that intelligence worth? \$349,999.99? Oops, it wasn't cost-effective. We don't need Civil Defense because the Russians would think we're going to make a first strike. Yep. But, the Russians and the Swiss and a whole lot of other countries have Civil Defense programs, so how are the 300 million of us any different? Disregard all of the rhetoric between the Republicans and Democrats, it's all for show. The Democrats couldn't find a foreign country with a map, both hands and a flashlight. The Republicans seem to have the same problem finding the United States.

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"Have you been watching the news?"

"I have, what about it?"

“It doesn’t give you a sinking feeling?”

“I didn’t say that it didn’t, Gar-Bear. We built Clarence’s shelter and they aren’t even here yet. I agree with you, it isn’t if, it’s only when and possibly who.”

“I don’t think there is any question of who either, Ron. The Russians won’t, even if they want to. It’s going to be the Chinese. That only leaves the question of when. If they recovered any of the Pakistani nuclear weapons, it will be sooner rather than later. With Washington and our 9 largest cities gone, the Chinese can target the other of the 100 largest cities in the country and hit extra empty silos. The terrorists hit Washington and that was on the 100 largest city list. So was Arlington, VA, Baltimore, MD, Norfolk, VA, Richmond, VA, Yonkers, NY and maybe a couple of places that I missed that the bombs didn’t get but the fallout did. That means that those Chinamen will either hit more military targets or more of the cities on the 101-150 cities list.”

◦

Overall, the yields since 1990 have suggested that two warheads have been in development: one in the 100-300 kT range, and one in the 600-700 kT range. The subject of China’s neutron bomb capability has been the subject of considerable public attention over the last several years. China reportedly conducted a successful test of a neutron bomb on 29 September 1988; in March 2000 a Chinese military newspaper threatened to use neutron bombs to capture Taiwan if it declared independence. But most of the attention has centered on alleged connections with the theft of nuclear secrets from the United States.

“How many weapons do they have?”

“Who knows? The last I read, they had 72 missiles with 2mT warheads, 20 missiles with 5mT warheads and an unknown number of 3mT strategic bombs. The Russians sold them those 40 Backfire C bombers and the Backfire C has a capacity of 24 thousand kg of bombs. What is to say that the Chinese didn’t reinstall the refueling probes? The Chinese have at least 10 of the H-6 aerial refueling planes. They aren’t worth a flip. I read somewhere that the PLAAF is also interested in acquiring a few IL-78 tankers to support its Su-30MKK fleet. According to the reports of Ilyushin Aircraft Corporation, negotiations on the acquisition of a large number of IL-76MDs and IL-78 tankers was resumed in early 2004, following a seven-day visit to Moscow by Chinese Defense Minister General Cao Gangchuan in December 2003. Although no official deal has been announced as to the number of aircraft involved, the PLAAF is understood to be seeking as many as 30 IL-76MDs and six IL-78 tankers.”

“So did they buy them?”

“If they did, do you think that the government would tell us? It isn’t like we really have ABM’s or anti-aircraft batteries sitting around the country. Radar only works if you are high enough off the ground for the radar to detect your plane. I think the Backfire C was

a Mach 2 aircraft. I want you to think in terms of our B-1B bombers equipped with 48,000 pounds of nuclear weapons. Alarmist, maybe, cautious, most certainly.”

“The government would nev... hmm”

“Were you going to say something, Ron?”

“Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition, Gar-Bear.”

“I thought so.”

o

“Hey Clarence, we thought that you were never going to get here.”

“Got the slab poured, huh? Call the contractor and tell him to start on the house the first of the week, Ron.”

“Clarence do Shirley and you want to live in your shelter or live with Linda and me?”

“I’ll ask her. Where’s Gary?”

“He ordered some more .45 Colt ammo and went to Flagstaff to pick it up.”

“I came out pretty good on the house, Ron. Who can we get to help arrange the furniture?”

“Didn’t you buy the complete moving package?”

“Nah, that’s a rip off. They unload it and dump it. They want a couple of thousand dollars to assemble the beds. They sell you a package to unload every box. But did you ever see them actually do it?”

“Now that you mention it, I’ll be danged, they didn’t did they?”

“Bought the complete moving package, didn’t you?”

“Yep.”

“And you unpacked all of your own boxes, didn’t you?”

“No need to rub it in, partner.”

“Hey Clarence, when did you get in?”

“About 10 minutes ago. Why didn’t you warn Ron about the moving scam?”

“It was a done deal by the time I had a chance so I just kept my mouth shut. Ron and I are partners too. The gun dealer in Flagstaff is holding 2 Winchester rifles and 2 Ruger revolvers for Shirley and you. You can pick them up whenever you’re ready.”

“I didn’t want no darned cowboy guns.”

“It’s part of the C, C & R’s pal.” (Either Covenants, Codes & Restriction or Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions; both mean basically the same thing.)

“Dang. Is next week soon enough?”

“No rush, he’ll hold them for you.”

“Shirley, I need some western shirts, jeans, a cowboy hat and boots.”

“That’s the spirit, Clarence.”

“How much am I going to owe you two for the land?”

“Do you want one acre?”

“It ought to be enough, yeah.”

“\$2,000.”

“That’s not too bad. What about the shelter?”

“How much money do you have, Clarence?”

“Not enough.”

“I thought you said that you came out pretty well on the house.”

“I did. That was before I knowed I had to buy 2 rifles, 2 revolvers, 2 gun belts, a whole new wardrobe and God only know what else.”

“You will only have to buy propane according to your usage, partner. We have the batteries, solar panels and inverters setback for you at the wholesale building supplier. Your shelter is identical to ours in every way, if you know what I mean. Robert didn’t need the stuff from Barstow anymore.”

“Where can I store my furniture?”

“We added some space onto the barn. That will protect it in case it rains. You can put the stuff for your shelter in your shelter. Do you have gas or electric appliances?”

“Gas.”

“You’ll either have to convert them to propane or get electric, Clarence. Your new home will be totally electric and the contractor can get you appliances very inexpensively.”

“Any recommendations?”

“Yes, one. Let Shirley pick them out. The electric hot water heater is already in the shelter and the hot water pipes are insulated. The generator is installed and you’re hooked into Gary’s and my electrical grid. The shelter is fully ready to occupy as soon as you put in the furniture and electrical appliances.”

“We’ll stay with you while we’re getting the appliances and then move into the shelter.”

“I have a shelter warming present for you Clarence,” Gary announced.

“What is it?”

“You can check the bottle later. I managed to get 30, sorry I couldn’t get more.”

You’re going to have to guess but the generic name of the drug is sildenafil. I had managed to get a prescription, but I didn’t have insurance and that particular drug is relatively expensive. Clarence could never get his doctor to give him a prescription or he just wouldn’t ask, I never found out. Clarence had an MI in 2004 and no sequelae. He did not take nitro. I doubted this doctor would give Clarence a prescription either, because of his heart. Maybe your best friends and their best intentions are your worst enemies. Or, maybe not. I had run all of his prescriptions and found no contraindications for sildenafil or the brand name. Clarence knew full well I wasn’t a doctor and didn’t claim to be one. Speaking of which, you ought to see our medicine chest now.

Holy medical clinic! (Robin, or based on what he usually says) And all of the drugs were current. Derek and I had been on a shopping trip when they’d been out in Arizona. Once you have the stuff, it is far easier to get a doctor to write prescriptions. Especially if you had taken a correspondence Combat Lifesaver class and have a certificate to show the doctor. He wants you to bring in the expired stuff and then he’ll write you Rx’s to replace what you have. I didn’t say it was easy, just that it had been worked out. I was working on a correspondence EMT-1 class. With the defibrillator available as a home model, I didn’t see the urgency of returning the one we ‘borrowed’. The doctor had to write prescription for the supplies for me.

o

Clarence and Shirley had come out very well on their home because it was sort of a dump when they bought it and they made repairs and cleaned it up. Their house in Palmdale, may it rest in peace, had sold very well and they’d been able to buy the

house west of Birmingham for cash with enough left over to make the repairs and put a little away. Clarence hates to paint. I remembered that from Palmdale when he painted the inside of their home and all of the trim. It must have taken him more than two months, a little at a time. He sort of approached it in stages. One day he'd move the furniture. The next day he'd paint the trim and the third day he'd roll paint on the walls. On the 4th day he'd move the furniture back and on the 5th day, he'd catch a meeting and mention his painting project. Clarence was pushing 25 years, too.

Clarence looked good in jeans and a western shirt; he's on the slender side. He got the boots wet and walked them dry. He also picked up the weapons in Flagstaff to get into compliance with the C, C & R's. He took Shirley and they filed out the paperwork and got the leather. He went back by himself a week later and picked up the revolvers. He only bought a couple of boxes of cartridges, but it didn't matter, I had 2,500 rounds. You can tell Clarence, he's the one with the white hat. I sprayed it with ScotchGard so he could keep it clean. I wear the black hat and Ron wears the brown.

When I picked up the Coach gun, I bought a couple of extra cases of the 12-pellet buck. That made 2,500 rounds of buckshot and 500 rounds of slugs. We were ready for WW III and probably WW IV. All Clarence needed was the standard package from Gonzales, Texas, extra dosimeters and KI. He went whole hog and bought a CD V-717 too. Apparently, he was keeping up with the Brown's and Ott's. They handed him the keys to his new house in 59 days. Not bad. He didn't have as much fancy trim as Ron and Linda and that probably made the difference. It also saved him one hell of a lot of money. Sharon had managed to repay the money on the shelf in my storage room, albeit grudgingly.

Bankrupt – Chapter 7

It turned out that the doctor was willing to write Clarence a prescription for sildenafil when he wrote Clarence new prescriptions for his other medications. Clarence simply made a list of the drugs he took and the doctor gave him a quick physical exam and wrote the prescriptions, which Clarence lost on the way home and had to get duplicates of. I showed him where the Wal-Mart and the Walgreen's stores were. I also showed him where the Costco store was located. We took the Chevy and the trailer and it still took 3 trips. Sharon started making good bread when I gave in and bought her 6 commercial (24 ounce) loaf pans.

Clarence was better with Robert's Super Match than I was with mine so I told Ron to let him use it. We hadn't skimped when we'd gone to Barstow. We'd gotten plenty of the practice grenades. The M16's sighting were close enough for Clarence and it didn't take him long to acclimate to the M203. The beauty of the three of us living in one location was that I had an extra CPAP. Ron had bought his outright, as had Sharon. I had eventually purchased a 10-liter oxygen machine. The company that rented the equipment to me was located in the Valley, what can I say? The only problem was my wheelchair, but I had a hoist to lower it into the shelter, providing we had time. The steel staircase could be lifted and folded in the middle and lay flat against the wall. That was necessary to get large items in and out of the shelters. With connecting tunnels, we only needed a single hoist and an appliance caddy. We had borrowed one from U-Haul. We didn't return everything we borrowed.

o

I had extra filters for my new oxygen machine and spares for the 5-liter machine that had been rented to me. The machine cost the company less than \$800. I had rented it for several years. They charged \$250 a quarter rent on the machine. Let me assure you, my conscience didn't bother me one little bit. The 10-liter machine was more like \$1,700. But, I was improvising, adapting and overcoming. My gut was driving me nuts.

For my readers who sometimes have trouble thinking about something I'm talking about, always think about the movies and TV. Over the course of the past century, nearly every possible scenario had been in one movie or another. If it hasn't, it has probably been a TV show. I generally watch action adventure movies and TV shows; usually, but not always. I have certain actors, male and female, that I like more than others. Some actors lose their luster and I stop watching their films. Ron is the same way but his tastes are more diverse than mine. He has every DVD that pertains to any picture released since they began putting movies on DVD's. He also has over 600 VHS movies and a few on Betas. Many of the things in my stories are based on or adapted from real life events. The remainder are based on or adapted from Hollywood scenarios.

It isn't always the movie hero who gets my attention. Does the name Eric Bogosian ring your chimes? That's the name of the actor who played Travis Dane in the movie, *Under*

Siege 2: Dark Territory. Now I have your attention. *Chance favors the prepared mind*, right? So who really said it? Louis Pasteur. The exact quote is: *In the field of observation, chance favors only the prepared mind.* George Santayana ought to ring your bell; I've quoted him enough. Democracies don't last very long. However some civilizations lasted a very long time. How about the Egyptians? 3,000 years.

Given the People's Republic of China's size in terms of geography (third in the world, only slightly behind Canada), population (number one), and economy (second largest in the world by 1999 CIA equivalent purchasing power estimates, with current growth rates in the high single digits), it seems inevitable that China (also called the PRC) will become the dominant power in the world within a few decades. China's leaders are acutely aware of this fact, and are also acutely aware that except for the last few centuries, China has consistently been the most powerful and advanced society in the world for 3500 years. They undoubtedly intend that China will have military capabilities commensurate with this once and future status. That's a quote too. It comes from the Nuclear Weapon Archive, which is hosted on multiple sites around the world. And now all of you know what I do when I have trouble sleeping – write another chapter.

Old people and babies have a lot in common. They sometimes get their days and nights mixed up. They sometimes wear diapers. Frequently neither has teeth. When they are told something, they can't seem to remember by the time the echo dies. Babies cry; some elderly whine, about everything. The life of the alcoholic is ALL about improvising, adapting and overcoming. Most are sarcastic, it beats lying all of the time. But, they're accomplished at lying. Most are of above average intelligence, that's part of their problem. Ron and I were talking about kicking booze. Once I started to get serious about doing it, it only took me 10 years. The day finally came when I had had enough of beating myself up. I stopped and never looked back. I remember my past; an alcoholic's past is his or her greatest asset, if they let it be.

o

The ducks were all in a row. We had electricity, firewood, and food for a very long time, ammo, weapons that we could use, and layers of redundancy. There were 7,500-gallons each of gasoline and diesel plus the depot sized propane tank was getting close to full. Preparations consist of 2 things: physical preparations and the right state of mind. Three old drunks who had beaten life at its own game; all experts in his own way of improvising, adapting and overcoming the worst that life could deal; all realists, we knew all about curve balls, too. Life was nothing but a huge cliché. Ron and Clarence had bad hearts, Clarence and Gar-Bear diabetes. When they didn't care whether they lived or died, they were invincible. Now that they wanted to live, they were old and paying for their sins.

If you watch very carefully, you'll see it coming. Most of it is between the lines, concealed in the garbage. It's what the government doesn't want you to know. Something makes you nervous. Maybe it's nothing more than something that didn't get said. You inventory your supplies. You add a little here and a little there. You set out the things

that you thought you'd use and didn't so you have more room for the things you should have gotten more of. You start to go to Costco twice a month instead of 3 times a year. You call the kids and invite them to come for the holidays, or something. You tell them to bring all of their stuff, it probably needs to be rotated; any excuse will do. You cross your fingers and hope that you are just being alarmist.

o

The non-strategic IL-78's takes off ahead of the non-strategic Backfire C bombers. The government notes the fact, but hell, planes fly, that's why they were built. The crews finish loading the 3mT weapons, top off the fuel and look longingly at the aircraft, which they'll probably never see again. Every gripe has been resolved; these planes are ready to fly. The Backfires and their fighter escorts take off in the early evening, to take advantage of the darkness. The crews have been carefully selected and all are single young people. The population has been moved from the area's most likely to receive a retaliatory attack. Not everyone, that would send too much of a signal. But enough that your planners tell you you'll come out ahead in the end.

The fighters hit the first waves of refueling aircraft and fill 'em up. Back home missiles are being made ready to fly. No one should expect a thing; you've just made conciliatory gestures to the American government. America is at Orange because someone somewhere perceived a terrorist threat. The American military is all back in America, but it is the holiday season and many are on leave. NORAD never sleeps. The President is awakened and told that there is some highly suspicious activity in the PRC. He orders DEFCON-3, as a precaution and retires to his makeshift situation room in Independence, Missouri. If the nation is alerted to the possibility of a foreign attack in the middle of the night, pandemonium will result. He doesn't warn the country.

The fighters and then the Backfires refuel and the tankers begin their long return trip to China. They're wave hopping now, hoping to avoid American radar. No one knows whether or not they will even make it to their targets. The instructions are to drop their bombs on *targets of opportunity* if they're jumped by American fighters. The President moves the country to DEFCON-2 because of some suspicious radar returns. Every bomber in the US fleet was loaded with nuclear weapons when the country went to DEFCON-3. The President departs Independence headed for Holloman AFB. Congressional leaders are aboard AF-1.

The Backfires break the coastline of Canada and the Canadians go on full alert. The President orders the tankers and bombers airborne and the fighters on 5 minute alert. An ELF message is sent to the SSBN's and they are given orders to fire in 6 hours, unless the order is cancelled, target China. AF-1 lands at Holloman and everyone scurries to the super-secret bunker. NORAD detects launches from China and the President calls for the man with the football. An order is given, a prayer said. And a statement is made, "God help us all."

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All of our kids grumbled but they loaded everything up and made the trip to Arizona. They brought everything they had in the way of survival supplies so we could update them. John had finally been located and he was at Ron and Linda's. Linda was grieving at the news that Kevin had died. Clarence's kids had come from Redding and all three families were assembled for Thanksgiving the following day. I heard that danged alarm go off that Ron had insisted on installing in all three homes. It was one of those security horns that will wake the dead. He had gotten up to pee and sat down to have a smoke. He turned on the TV, he was restless, and CNN was saying something about all of the American boats leaving port and now all of the bombers were airborne. He hit the alarm.

We had long conversations what to do in such a situation. Act first and worry about it later was the plan. It was a simple plan because simple is better and easier to remember. I put on a clean pair of jeans, a clean western cut shirt, my Laredo's and strapped on my Vaquero. Sharon threw on a housecoat and we herded the complaining children to the shelter. All because Ron had to pee and decided to watch the news while he had a cigarette. There was a lot of food prepared in advance for the big meal we had planned. It was moved to the refrigerators in the shelter or into coolers. We had invited Bert to Spend Thanksgiving with us, a fluke. He rushed to the barn and checked on the livestock and gave them enough feed, he hoped, to last a while. The cattle were herded inside the barn and some of the younger people helped Bert move hay over the entrances to the barn.

It went like clockwork. My father had a device to lift Gayle's wheelchair in and out of the trunk of his Towncar. It was rather simple. 4 seatbelt metal prongs on the wheelchair and a hoist that had the seatbelts that clipped onto the chair. I had a similar arrangement with a longer cable. I had used it a couple of days earlier and stored my wheelchair in the shelter because we needed the space in the cabin. Clarence had the most room so he got Bert in his shelter. Bert was nervous by now. Ron gave him a half pint of Jim Beam and he settled right down. The women went ahead and started Thanksgiving dinner in the ovens in the shelters. The shelter started to warm up from the population explosion and the ovens. My second alarm went off and I let the generator go ahead and kick in. I turned on the air conditioner because it was getting warm.

"Ron, let's get together at Clarence's and watch the news," I suggested on the intercom.

"I'll start the coffee," Clarence replied.

I ran my wheelchair over the ramp into the tunnel and headed to Clarence's at 5 dots indicated speed, e.g., wide open. Clarence had the TV on and had a grim look on his face. The coffee was ready and I wheeled my chair in front of the TV to watch the end of the world and wait for wheezer one to show up. He did and he was. Clarence had a small US map and a magic marker. He was the designated scorekeeper. I could almost hear Sharon bitching 300' away in our shelter. I should have gone to Costco; I was

down to my last 50 cartons of Kool's and last 12 cartons of Marlboros. Maybe we would go to the Day After Thanksgiving Sales. Not!

I figured that Barstow would be high on the Chinese target list because they read the papers too. The President came on TV right after the EAS tone sounded. He said, "*My Fellow Americans...*" and the TV lost its signal. Clarence put his map away.

"Dang."

"I guess that about covers it," I agreed.

"Who's on first?" Clarence asked.

"Danged if I know, but I think the US is sucking the hind teat."

"I'll second the motion."

"This is going to be a very interesting winter," Clarence observed.

"It could be spring before we get out of these shelters, partner."

"The good news is that I have 2,000 Xanax," I added.

"But... Gar-Bear, do you have enough toilet paper?"

"Probably not, it's bulky, you know. I have about 1,500 rolls. But, Costco will probably be open in about 100 days or so."

"What are you going to do if they aren't?"

"Go to Wal-Mart, like always."

o

Some of those 40 Backfires got through, most didn't. When possible, they dropped, not jettisoned, their bombs on targets of opportunity. None of them made it back to China. The Chinese had missile systems the US knew nothing about. They could deliver their weapons to the eastern portion of the United States. No one was surprised at the American response. All 50 of the Peacekeepers and all 500 of the Minuteman III missiles were launched to prevent their destruction in their silos. The United States still had 2,688 warheads on the Ohio class SSBN's. The SSBN's were ordered to stand down. No one else was going to attack the United States, not under those circumstances.

The United States of America was a nuclear wasteland. It would be a generation before the background radiation returned to normal levels, maybe longer. China had miscalculated because the United States had nothing to lose and about half of the Minuteman

missiles had 3 warheads. 1,500 300kt warheads rained down on China. $50 \times 10 = 500$. $250 \times 3 = 750$. $250 \times 1 = 250$. $500 + 750 + 250 = 1,500$. That was about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the US nuclear force. It was the end of the world, for the unprepared. *Chance favors the prepared mind*. It was good enough for Louis Pasteur and Travis Dane. It was most certainly good enough for my pals and me.

Fame
Irene Cara

*Baby look at me
And tell me what you see
You ain't seen the best of me yet
Give me time I'll make you forget the rest*

*I got more in me
And you can set it free
I can catch the moon in my hands
Don't you know who I am*

*Remember my name
Fame*

*I'm gonna live forever
I'm gonna learn how to fly
High*

*I feel it coming together
People will see me and cry
Fame*

*I'm gonna make it to heaven
Light up the sky like a flame
Fame*

*I'm gonna live forever
Baby remember my name*

*Remember
Remember
Remember
Remember
Remember
Remember
Remember*

*Baby hold me tight
Cause you can make it right
You can shoot me straight to the top
Give me love and take all I've got to give*

*Baby I'll be tough
Too much is not enough
I can ride your heart til it breaks
Ooh I got what it takes*

*Fame
I'm gonna live forever
I'm gonna learn how to fly
High*

*I feel it coming together
People will see me and cry
Fame*

*I'm gonna make it to heaven
Light up the sky like a flame
Fame*

*I'm gonna live forever
Baby remember my name
Fame*

The operative expression here was, *I'm going to live forever*. One of my favorite artists, her other blockbuster hit was *What a Feeling*. Maybe later, maybe never, we'll see.

Ron, Clarence and I are going to live forever. Why? Because I told our story and we aren't 3 old farts in Palmdale, California that nobody ever heard of. Our legacy is our children. Our legacy is our state of mind. I can't include all of you in my will; a penny is the smallest coin we have. If I made you think and that thinking leads to your survival, I've done my part. There is just something about the end of the world that makes a person feel mortal. But for the moment, I can smell the turkeys cooking in the ovens, yum.

You know the Thanksgiving drill, right? Two kinds of potatoes because you can't put gravy on sweet potatoes; pistachio nut salad, cranberry salad, candied sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, dressing, gravy, sliced turkey and burn and serve rolls. Family joke from when Dad and Gayle got married, she forgot the brown and serve rolls in the oven. My old man liked to do standing rib roast on Thanksgiving in the later years. Cook it for an hour at 350-375 in the oven and shut off the heat. Don't open the door. An hour before you're ready to eat, turn the oven back on at 350-375 for an hour. Let stand for 15 minutes and carve. It's easy to do standing rib. Do you have a Thanksgiving memory? There was the year Dad took us all to a restaurant for Thanksgiving. We couldn't eat the

turkey, it was a little underdone. 4 hours in the oven after we got home fixed that! You heard me, 4 hours.

“Don’t bother turning on the CD V-717’s fellas. We can wait 2 weeks and then turn them on.”

“You think?”

“I know. Didn’t you feel the ground shake a little?”

“I thought it was an earthquake.”

“It may well have been. Pass the turkey.”

“Pass your plate, white meat or dark meat?”

“I’m a leg man, white meat.”

“I don’t know if I like all of this levity in the middle of World War Three,” Linda said.

“The War is over, Linda. World War Three only lasted 80 minutes. But, Clarence was right; we are in for one hell of a winter.”

“What do you figure, Gar-Bear, 100 days?”

“Ron, it is either 100 days or 2 years, it depends on the radiation. I sure hope it isn’t 2 years, I only have 1,500 rolls of toilet paper.”

“What about the livestock?”

“I have a level III suit that Bert can wear to feed them. If we had been thinking, we would have extended the tunnel to the barn. I thought about it and read about it in a story, but I never thought to do it.”

“You didn’t notice?”

“Notice what?”

“I had the contractor extend the tunnel to the barn.”

“Where the hell was I when he was doing that?”

“Where you usually are. With your nose stuck in your computer screen surfing the web and writing stories about the end of the world.”

“Huh, a little more gravy on the spuds, Ron.”

“You eat all of those spuds and gravy; you’re going to get fat.”

“Really? Give me some more dressing and put gravy on it too.”

“Amy run down to the shelter and get the pistachio nut salad. I forgot it.”

“Again? It’s good for desert fellas.”

“Anyone want a cloverleaf roll?” Shirley asked.

“How come they’re brown instead of black?”

“Somebody turn off that dangd survey meter, it’s driving me nuts. It sounds like a darned buzzer.”

“Shirley these rolls don’t even taste burned.”

“I can put them back in and burn some for you.”

“No thanks, they’re actually good to eat.”

“What’s for desert?”

“Let’s see, we have pumpkin pie with dream whip and pistachio nut salad.”

And now you know what the end of the world will be like if you live in the country and have a bomb shelter. People, who lived in the big cities, were the turkeys and they were well done. You can’t say that they weren’t warned. You can say that they didn’t listen. You can also say that it doesn’t really matter anymore. Got milk? Yes, but it makes the survey meter click.

“Am I still going to get paid?” Bert asked.

“Sure Bert. We figured a half pint a day plus room and board, ammo and feed for your horse. May a dollar a day in silver coin.”

“I don’t have a horse, Mr. Brown.”

“Sure you do, that’s why we had 7. The horse that you always ride is now yours. I’d prefer to dole out the liquor a little at a time until you see the light.”

“What light?”

“Bert, we’re all drunks the same as you are. The only difference is we don’t drink. You’re 43 years old and you look as old as us.”

“You lecturing me on my drinking?”

“Nope, it wouldn’t do any good. But, we have a limited supply of that Jim Beam so you’d better think about rationing it.”

“I only drink on the weekend.”

“We know. And it was your business until we invited you into our shelters. Now, it’s our business. We’ve all been there, done that and have the scars to prove it. I’ve been living on borrowed time ever since I drank myself to death. Literally. I died back in 1992. The next thing I knew, I was in a recovery room getting over heart bypass surgery. Clarence has had a bypass, too. Both he and Gary have diabetes. All three of us look like someone used us for suturing practice.”

“What about my stuff?”

“What stuff?”

“The things in my trailer in town.”

“Assuming we can get into town, we can pull your trailer back here, how would that be?”

“Well... I still need my medicine.”

“What do you take?”

“High blood pressure medicine.”

“Which one?”

“Calan.”

“That’s verapamil, we have you covered, what strength?”

“80mg.”

“Derek? What’s our inventory of 80mg verapamil?”

“We have 1,200 doses, Dad.”

Bankrupt – Chapter 8

I only had one of the level III suits. They cost about a grand and I wasn't rich. I got Bert into it after 10 days and we headed down the tunnel with me leading the way at 3 dots, medium speed. I had the CD V-742 dosimeter on, as did Bert. We had taken KI. I had the CD V-715 set to the x10 scale. It was barely clicking. Once we got to the barn and opened the 4th access to the tunnel that I knew nothing about, I switched it to the x1 scale. I checked around while Bert fed the livestock. They were nervous, but otherwise seemed ok. The CD V-717 had said something on the order of 1R/hr. The level in the barn was 0.01 times that or 0.01R/hr. Thank God the cow wasn't lactating. We had been very lucky.

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There isn't much for targets in the Flagstaff, Arizona area. The city is too small. That doesn't mean that there wasn't fallout. What fallout we got was persistent. We ended up staying in the shelter until Saturday, March 7, 2009. Even then, we limited our time out of the shelter. We went into Mayer, hosed down Bert's trailer and hauled it back to the acreage. It didn't need to be taken off blocks or anything because Bert had a travel trailer. What you were thinking an active alcoholic who had very little income maybe had a 14'x70' 3 bedroom singlewide? On another day, we headed to Prescott Valley. We took cash, gold and silver, but we also took David and his lock picks and a couple of pry bars.

We had several problems to resolve. For one thing, we needed housing for the kids. Mary had checked, via radio, with her family in Flippin and they were ok. For another thing, we needed to replace the things we used. Bert came along to acquire some booze. Anything would do, but Bourbon was preferred.

Prescott is a city located in Yavapai County, Arizona. As of the 2000 census, the city had a total population of 33,938. The city is the county seat of Yavapai County, and was the original capital of the Arizona Territory from 1863 until the Territorial Capital was moved to Tucson in 1867. Prescott again became the Territorial Capital in 1877, until the capital was changed to Phoenix, Arizona in 1889. The towns of Prescott Valley (7 miles south, east-northeast actually) and Chino Valley (16 miles north), and Prescott, together make up the area known locally as "tri-city". The Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe reservation is located next to, and partially within, the borders of Prescott. These four government entities sometimes work together on projects of mutual interest. This is not always true, evidenced by the conflict over Prescott buying the water rights of Chino Valley's rich Verde River watershed.

There are 2 Wal-Mart stores in Prescott and one in Cottonwood. There is a Costco in Prescott and another in Prescott Valley east northeast of Prescott on 89. It was the store we usually went to, but what you couldn't get in one, you could usually find in the other. We could get whatever we had the money to pay for. Bubba and company had been hired by Costco to protect those stores. They were carrying shotguns and

M1911's. The badges said Security but a Bubba with a gun and badge is a Bubba with a gun and badge. We had them outnumbered, but hey, they told us to put our guns in the vehicles, get a cart and go shopping. I'd never been on a shopping trip like that in my whole life.

You told the fella what you wanted and how many. He sent somebody to get whatever they would allow you to have. In WW II, they called it rationing. We were lucky. By the time we hit the stores in Prescott Valley and Prescott plus the Wal-Mart stores that had hired Bubba's cousins, we were back up to speed on almost everything. That is to say that we replaced what we had used but didn't really have any more than we started with in the first place. Then we went over to Cottonwood and Bubba's other cousin was there. We could grow food if the weather warmed up but we couldn't grow factory rolled cigarettes or toilet paper. Tobacco – maybe.

The population of Prescott was down to about 20,000 and falling. What did that portend for the rest of the country? It didn't matter, we had our families together. Bert was disappointed, no alcohol sales, anywhere. Bert took some of the corn we had for cattle feed... and improvised, adapted and overcame. I think they call that stuff moonshine. I knew it was a mistake to let him watch *Heartbreak Ridge*.

What was it like after the end of the world? The same as before the end of the world, but colder. The survey meters that everyone insisted on calling Geiger counters clicked more. We hosed down the grass and let the horses and cattle out of the barn. We scraped off a layer of soil and rototilled a large area for a garden. Same stuff, different day. Almost. Whoever invented the term Mutant Zombie Bikers was almost right. Except they drove old pickups and didn't look like Mutants. They moved a whole lot better than Zombies, come to think of it. Ron just called them assholes.

Chugga, chugga, chugga, chugga, chugga, assholes, chugga, chugga, chugga, chugga, chugga, assholes. You get the general idea, right? I didn't know who or what Ron was calling assholes. He was only shooting at a target. The target was just 200 meters away from the heavy machine gun. The target couldn't run and hide. It started out to be a mannequin. After a belt of ammo, it was still a mannequin. Derek put in a new belt of ammo and showed Ron how to use the Ma Deuce. Derek only fired a single burst. The mannequin was gone. The Ma Deuce is called a crew served weapon for a reason. They are heavy. Derek explained it to Ron. We hadn't been attacked by anyone. It was another fortunate situation. If we had been attacked, the attackers would have won, hands down.

By itself the M240B is also a crew served weapon. It is 4' long and weighs 24 pounds, without ammo. As a machine gun on an Abrams tank, either machine gun is fine, excellent, in fact. Remember, we also had Mk 19's. We didn't even drag them out of the armories. The gun weighs 73 pounds. The tripod adds 44 pounds. The rounds go about a pound apiece. We were ready for WW III, but the weapons were too heavy for a bunch of old men. I used to store my ammo in an Mk-46 .50 caliber ammo can. When it was

full, I could barely pick it up. And that was back when I was younger and healthy. It was all a good idea, for a bunch of 20-year-old hunks.

“Do we have a plan C?”

“What about plan B?”

“I don’t know, Gar-Bear, but I’m too tired to pick up a plan B.”

“We need to build a defensive perimeter,” I suggested, I’d read that on the Internet.

“How much does that weigh?” Ron asked.

“You’re going to like that part, Ron. It doesn’t weigh anything. We figure out an area that we can defend with the number of people and the number of weapons we have and dig foxholes. They call them fighting positions in the books these days. I guess someone doesn’t like foxes or the foxes hired the ACLU to represent them. Anyway we leave our supplies in the foxholes and fight from there. We’ll have to interconnect the positions with trenches so you don’t get shot in the butt when we have to retreat.”

“Can I blow my bugle now?”

“That was a different story, Clarence.”

“Really, I bought a bugle.”

“What can you play?”

“Nothing. I played the piano once.”

“Clarence you’ll be too busy shooting at the MZB’s to worry about blowing a bugle.”

“What a MZB?”

“Mutant Zombie Biker.”

“Oh, like Damon?”

“With longer hair, dirtier clothes and the wrong attitude, yes.”

“Just exactly like Damon, Clarence,” Ron chuckled.

“Don’t shoot at Damon; I gave him shells for the shotgun. He’ll probably shoot back.”

“How big of an area can we defend?”

“Let’s see. There are the 3 of us, Damon and Derek, David and his 4 boys, James and Clarence Jr., Ronnie Joe and Brenda’s husband – I can never remember his name, Mark, John and Bert. I guess that makes 17 men. Did I miss anyone? No? How big of an area can 17 people cover?”

“That’s less than 2 squads, Dad. Not very big. Besides, if you put in any of the crew served weapons, we’ll have a tradeoff. Crew served weapons are a force multiplier but even with fixed positions, we’ll need at least 2 people on every weapon. Plus, a perimeter is like a circle and we are going to need to be able to defend in every direction. I think we’re pretty much screwed with only 17 people.”

“What do you mean screwed?”

“The most crew served fire we can bring to bear is 3 of the 4 weapons and more likely 2 of the 4. That means that we’ll have 4 people manning the heavy weapons and 13 people using rifles.”

“But Derek we have Mk 19s and Ma Deuces. All of the M16s have the M203s installed. Let’s say that we use 2 of the .50 caliber machine guns and 2 of the Mk 19 with prepositioned ammo. We have cases of the M16 magazines and at 27 rounds per; we can lay down a heavy level of fire. The individual weapons are all suppressed, but too high of a volume of fire will burn out the barrels on all of our weapons. We have enough M16s to give everyone two and we have 6 medium or heavy machineguns plus 3 of the Mk 19s. Then there are 8 7.62s, 5 Barrett rifles, 1 Tac-50 and hand grenades.”

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At the beginning of Iraqi Freedom, a report was issued on deficiencies and problems with American weapons. It is too long to reproduce. The report discussed the following weapons, all of which had problems:

Mk 19 GMG

The Mk 19 supports the soldier in both the offense and defense. It gives the unit a heavy volume of close, accurate, and continuous fire. It can also be used to:

- a. Protect motor movements, assembly areas, and supply trains in bivouac.
- b. Defend against hovering rotary aircraft.
- c. Destroy lightly armored vehicles.
- d. Fire on suspected enemy positions.
- e. Provide high volumes of fire into an engagement area.
- f. Cover obstacles.
- g. Provide indirect fire from defilade positions
- h. Cover dead space

The Mk 19 has a maximum range of 2212 meters, with an effective range at point targets of 1,500 and area targets of 2122 meters. Cyclic rate is between 325-375 rounds per minute, with a sustained rate of 60 rounds per minute and a rapid rate of 40 rounds per minute. Ammunition muzzle velocity is approximately 790 feet per second. The overall length of the system is 43.1 inches and weight of the weapon is approximately 75.6 pounds. Mounts include the M3 Tripod, M4 pedestal, M66 ring and HMMWV weapon platform. Angle of fire is from 0-70 degrees. Average recoil forces are 500 pounds.

The only round observed to have been used in theater was the HEDP M430 cartridge. The HEDP (high-explosive, dual-purpose) M430 cartridge, joined with M16A2 links, is the standard round for the Mk 19. The impact-type round penetrates 2 inches of steel armor at 0-degree obliquity and inflicts personnel casualties in the target area. This round is packed in an M548 ammunition container (48 rounds, linked, in each container). It is olive drab with a yellow ogive and yellow markings. It has a PIBD, M549 fuze, and Comp B filler. It arms between 18 to 30 meters and has a casualty radius of 15 meters.

M2HB .50 Caliber Machine Gun

The M2 Caliber .50 Heavy Barrel Machine Gun is a recoil operated weapon system capable of sustained rates of fire between 450 and 600 rounds per minute. The weight of the gun with barrel is approximately 84 pounds.

The ammunition average velocity is 2910 feet per second. It has a maximum range of 7400 meters with a maximum effective range of approximately 1830 meters and a grazing range of 1000 meters. There are 5 types of ammunition for this system known to be in theater, M8 Armor Piercing Incendiary, M17 Tracer, M20 Armor Piercing Incendiary Tracer, M903 Slap and Mk211 Multi-Purpose.

M240B MMG

The M240B machine gun supports the rifleman in both offensive and defensive operations. The M240B provides the heavy volume of close and continuous fire needed to accomplish the mission. The M240B is used to engage targets beyond the range of individual weapons, with controlled and accurate fire. The long-range, close defensive, and final protective fires delivered by the M240B form an integral part of a unit's defensive fires.

The M240B is a general-purpose machine gun. Weight without the mount is approximately 27.6 pounds. It can be mounted on a bipod, tripod, aircraft, or vehicle. The M240B is a belt-fed, air-cooled, gas-operated, fully automatic machine gun that fires from the open bolt position. Ammunition is fed into the weapon from a 100-round bandoleer containing a disintegrating metallic split-link belt. The gas from firing one round provides the energy for firing the next round. Thus, the gun functions automatically as long as it is supplied with ammunition and the trigger is held to the rear. As the gun is fired,

the belt links separate and are ejected from the side. Empty cases are ejected from the bottom of the gun. A spare barrel is issued with each M240B, and barrels can be changed quickly as the weapon has a fixed head space. The bore of the barrel is chromium plated, reducing barrel wear to a minimum.

The M240B machine gun uses 2 different types of 7.62-mm standard military ammunition. The ammunition is issued in a disintegrating, metallic, split-linked belt. Ammunition includes the 7.62-MM M80 Ball Cartridge and the M62 Tracer Cartridge linked in a 4 Ball to 1 tracer configuration with the M13 link.

Maximum range of the system is approximately 3,725 meters. Effective range with the Tripod for area fire is approx. 1100 meters and 800 meters with the Bipod. Point fire is 800 meters for the Tripod and 600 for the Bipod. For suppression fire it is 1800 meters. Tracer burn out is approximately 900 meters.

M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW)

The M249 Light Machine Gun is a gas-operated, air-cooled, belt-and magazine-fed, automatic weapon that fires from the open-bolt position. It has a maximum rate of fire of 850 rounds per minute. Primarily, ammunition is fed into the weapon from a 200-round ammunition box containing a disintegrating metallic split-link belt. As an emergency means of feeding, the M249 AR can use a 20 or 30 round M16 rifle magazines, but this increases the chance of stoppages. Although the M249 is primarily used as an automatic rifle, it is also used as a light machine gun. It can be fired from the shoulder, hip, or underarm position; or from the bipod-steadied position. When employed as a machine gun, it has a tripod with a T&E mechanism and a spare barrel.

5.56mm Ammunition

The M855 5.56mm ball cartridge has a gilding, metal-jacketed, lead alloy core bullet with a steel penetrator. The primer and case are waterproof. The ammunition is linked by a disintegrating metallic split-linked belt for firing from the ammunition box. In an emergency, the M855 round can also be loaded and fired from the M16 20 or 30 round magazines. It is identified by a green tip, has a projectile weight of 62 grains, and is 2.3 cm long. This is the NATO standard round. It is effective against personnel and light materials, not vehicles.

The M856 5.56-mm tracer cartridge has a 63.7-grain bullet without a steel penetrator. An orange tip identifies it. The tracer is used for adjustments after observation, incendiary effects, and signaling. When tracer rounds are fired, they are mixed with ball ammunition in a ratio of four ball rounds to one tracer round.

M16 Series Rifles

M16A4 MWS:

M16A4 Rifle is a standard M16A2 Rifle with a flat top upper receiver and detachable carrying handle. The flat top upper receiver has an integral rail that will be utilized (when the carrying handle is removed) to mount optical devices to the weapon. The M16A4 Rifle in combination with the M5 Rail Adapter forms the Modular Weapon System (rifle version), which provides soldiers the flexibility to configure their weapons with those accessories required to fulfill an assigned mission. There are no differences between the internal dimensions of the M16A2 Rifle and the M16A4 Rifle.

The weight of the M16A4 rifle is approximately 10.09 pounds with a 30 round magazine and sling. Overall length is 39.63 inches. Rates of fire are 90 rounds per minute in 3 round burst mode and 45 rounds per minute in semiautomatic mode. Maximum range of the ammunition is 3600 meters. Maximum effective range for point targets is 550 meters and for area targets is 600 meters. Ammunition muzzle velocity is 3100 feet per second and exhibits a cyclic rate of 800 rounds per minute.

M4 MWS:

The M4/M4A1 5.56mm Carbine is a lightweight, gas operated, air-cooled, magazine fed, selective rate, shoulder-fired weapon with a collapsible stock. A shortened variant of the M16A2 rifle, the M4 provides the individual soldier operating in close quarters the capability to engage targets at extended range with accurate, lethal fire. The M4 Carbine achieves over 80% commonality with the M16 Rifle.

M203 GL

The M203 40-MM Grenade Launcher is a lightweight, single shot, breech loaded, pump action (sliding barrel), and shoulder-fired weapon attached to the M16A3 rifle or M4 Carbine. Length of the barrel is 12 inches and the system when assembled to the M16 rifle weighs approximately 11.12 pounds. Maximum effective range of the ammunition is 400 meters. For area target suppression effective range is 350 meters while point target is 150 meters. With the leaf sight maximum effective range is approximately 250 meters.

M9 Pistol

The M9 pistol is a 9mm semiautomatic, magazine-fed, recoil-operation, double-action weapon chambered for the 9mm cartridge. The M9 pistol has a short recoil system using a falling locking block. The magazine has a 15-round capacity. Weight of the weapon with a loaded magazine is 2.6 pounds.

Ammunition used for the M9 Pistol is the M882 9mm Ball cartridge. Muzzle velocity of the projectile is approximately 375 meters. It delivers 569.5 Newton meters of muzzle energy. Maximum range of the cartridge is 1,800 meters. Maximum effective range is 50 meters.

M107 Long Range Sniper Rifle (LRSR)

The M107 caliber .50 LRSR is a non-developmental item (NDI) joint service program. The M107 includes a removable companion optic to assist in identifying and engaging man sized targets at 1000 Meters and vehicle targets at 1700 Meters.

The Mk211 caliber .50 multipurpose cartridges will be used as the primary tactical round.

M24 Sniper Weapon System (SWS)

The M24 SWS is a non-developmental item consisting of a 7.62 mm bolt action 6 shot repeating rifle chambered for the 308 Win M118/M118LR special ball ammunition, day optic sight with 10 power magnification and adjustable focus, metallic iron sights, deployment kit, cleaning kit, (rifle and optic), soft rifle carrying case, optic case, system case, operators manual, and bipod (optional). Associated Support Items of Equipment (ASIOE) include a Sniper Night Sight, and an improved spotting scope. The combat weight (rifle with sling, day optic sight, and full magazine) is 14.25 lbs. The weight with bipod and tools is 17 pounds. The M24 SWS total weight (less ASIOE) is 64 lbs. The weapon's length is 40.75 inches. The maximum range is 800m.

Lightweight Shotgun System

The Lightweight Shotgun System (LSS) is an accessory that attaches underneath the barrel of the M4 and M16 Modular Weapon Systems and provides the capability to fire lethal and non-lethal 12 gauge rounds as well as door breaching. The LSS provides the capability equivalent to a standalone shotgun without carrying a second weapon for non-lethal and door breaching capability.

All of which had problems, some major. Proper ammo was one of those problems. They were using .50BMG ammo in their M107's that was delinked ammo made in Des Moines, Iowa in 1943, the year I was born. The grenades for the Mk 19 were misaligned in the belts and the weapon weighed a ton. They didn't have match ammo for the SWS. The springs in the M9 magazines were no good. Ditto the M16 magazines. The SAWs were falling apart and had improper ammo. Ditto the M240B. Aside from the weight, Ma Deuce was much beloved. Why is the oldest always the best?

The report is long and detailed. I read all of it, several times. I have also read similar reports. Our soldiers are there to fight the enemy, not their weapons. Over the years, our enemies have gotten more sophisticated. Of note is the fact that they can destroy an Abrams tank with an IED. I always thought the only problem our soldiers had was getting ammo to the front lines. This is a different war. The enemies are religious zealots, more than willing to die for the cause.

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We sandbagged Clarence's shelter entrance and dug trenches out and then encircled the sandbagged the foxholes. We used 2 Mk 19's and 2 Ma Deuces, alternating the weapons. 2 M240B's and one each of the MK 19 and M2HB were held in reserve. We loaded the M16 magazines with 27 rounds each and piled boxes of magazines at every foxhole. It looked more like a WW I set of trenches. We 3 senior citizens picked a spot to defend and used an M1A rifle with the magazines loaded to 90% capacity. Let them come. They didn't.

Reading the labels on the seed packages was mostly unimportant. Once the seeds were out of the hermetically sealed cans, we had to use them. We found additional scabbards for the horses and everyone carried a handgun, rifle and extra weapon, usually an MBR or an AR. We foraged. That's the \$9 version of scavenged. In some respects, the country was better off after WW III than after the terrorist attacks. More people were prepared and their preparations were pretty dang good, all things being considered. In a way, the nuclear terrorist attacks had been our wakeup call and a lot of people had woken up.

Although we were up to 8-hour days, 5 days a week, we continued to sleep in the shelters. The radiation was very persistent. However, we weren't all that far from Phoenix and Phoenix became very important. Nothing more than a ghost town, it was our supermarket. Greater Phoenix was one of the 10 largest communities in the United States. It was also a forager's dream. We couldn't stay long, but we could zip into town, hit a store or two and beat a hasty retreat. We could also recover fuel and so forth. We had to take my 6.5kw portable generator to power the suction pump but there were a lot of gas stations in the suburbs away from the central blast area.

We had gardens, livestock and a National Forest with wildlife only a short distance away. You can imagine what our list looked like: Toilet paper, cigarettes, staples, spices, fuel and items to adapt from our current style of living to the style of an earlier time. Everything was inspected with a survey meter before it was touched. Items in outlying buildings, like some of the Costco and Wal-Mart stores were fine. I don't know how we did it, but we kept the fuel tanks topped off and stabilized. We found additional weapons and ammo plus archery equipment and the like.

Bert went along on one trip and brought back a pickup load of Bourbon. As long as Bert only drank on weekends we went ahead and let him kill himself, albeit slowly. Then, Bert had an acute pancreatitis attack. I let him suffer a couple of days and then switched him to NPO (Nil Per Os) and Morphine. Later, Bert started to attend our little meetings, all on his own.

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Items to adapt from our current style of living to the style of an earlier time translates into horse drawn equipment. Remember, we only had 5 acres so we didn't need much equipment. We needed draft horses, not saddle horses, to farm with and the trips to Phoenix gave us something to trade. We didn't have a bull, but a neighbor did. His bull

serviced the cattle in trade for one of the offspring. Draft horses were premium items and it took a saddle horse and a fair amount of the Phoenix booty to acquire even a single horse. We needed at least a team of two, possibly 4. God bless museums, especially western heritage museums.

We needed a wagon or two, a plow and so forth. We cleaned out a museum or two or three and had equipment to share with our neighbors. The stores in the area rationed their stock of goods until they ran out, and then closed their doors. It would be a while before they had anything more on their shelves. I suppose we could have gone to Flagstaff and swiped another Chevron tanker of fuel, but I didn't really take well to being called a low down thief in the paper. Out on I-40 was a different question entirely. We finally found a driver with his tanker in a truck stop and worked out a deal. He'd drop the two trailers of diesel fuel in exchange for our filling his cab and sleeper with salvaged food from Phoenix and a weapon and ammo.

Early on, we started acquiring as much propane as the dealer in Flagstaff would sell us. We located a depot in the greater Phoenix area and stole a truck. It wouldn't run but we towed it back to Mayer and a mechanic worked on the diesel engine and got it going. We told the Flagstaff propane dealer about our find and started a weekly trip to finish filling our propane tank. No doubt he made a few trips to Phoenix himself or sent some of his people. It never hurts to build up a few credits or have a favor or two on call when you might need a favor later. We let word leak out about the food in the greater Phoenix area too. Most of the canned goods were useless but even if the spaghetti sauce in the jar was bad, there was nothing wrong with the jar itself. You've noticed how many people pack spaghetti sauce in Mason jars, haven't you? I just wish they'd use lids and rings instead of the none-reusable caps on the jars.

The good part about needing to go back to earlier times was we still had indoor plumbing and electricity. A few clear channel radio stations eventually made it back on the air and there was news. Very little news, but news. World War IV was raging in Europe. It was strictly a conventional war, so far. Germany started it off by seizing France. Russia followed up by seizing Eastern Europe and several Mediterranean areas.

Bankrupt – Chapter 9

This story has the right name after all. After the terrorist attacks it took the government a short time to reestablish the entitlements, e.g., Social Security Disability (SSD not SSI) payments. This time there wasn't any way that was going to happen. Fearing the worst, Ron, Clarence and I had cashed in any investments and emptied our bank accounts. The funds were either kept in cash or converted to gold and silver, mostly the latter and especially silver. I still had over \$600 grand in a Trust Fund in the bank in Charles City, Iowa. Most of that money was invested in Government Securities. I didn't know if the Fund had any money in it or not. For sure it did, on paper, but paper isn't very nourishing and it is a long ways from Mayer, Arizona to Charles City, Iowa.

So, for all practical purposes, I didn't have any money in Iowa either. Let's take that point just a tiny bit further. Let's assume that I could get to Charles City, Iowa. Most banks barely keep \$600,000 in cash on hand, especially in a small town like Charles City. And, even if they did, there would be no way that they would give me most of their cash. Whatever cash, gold and silver I had on hand when the world ended was probably the sum total of our present assets. Clarence had only been getting his pension because it wasn't directly paid by his former employer but by a management company of some kind. Ditto his and Ron's Social Security. All gone now.

On the other hand, we weren't make out so bad with our foraging efforts. In practical terms, we were way ahead of the curve because we were willing to risk going to Phoenix. The CD V-742's and the CD V-715's were our constant companions. And, we had spare dosimeters, one spare for every person. At the time it was an expensive and seemingly foolish investment. Made Sharon angry, but she got over it, on Thanksgiving of 2008.

Silver coin was set at a value of 10 times face value. Gold was valued by taking a ratio between the value of silver and gold and multiplying. It worked out to an ounce of gold being worth 50 times the value of an ounce of silver. To provide housing for the families, we waited until the population seemed to stabilize a little and then went looking for good, used late-model mobile homes, 14'x70'. We didn't have to do any more than reallocate resources in that regard. Eventually, we ended up with enough homes for everyone and a few spares. Here we go again, another trailer park survival community.

Right, except we didn't put the trailers on our 5 acres. And, we didn't dig another well and run plumbing, either. We traded for bottle gas for their stoves assuming they could convert the stoves and/or furnaces to bottle gas, but they were on their own on electrical energy. What excess capacity we had was needed to supply the trailers that the kids lived in, there were 10 of them. It is a cold cruel world out there. We turned their soil for them and provided heirloom seeds, but we didn't plant, weed, water or harvest their gardens. We did give them diesel fuel for their oil lamps, if they had any. We did share the firewood because they helped harvest it.

People who wanted to go with us to Phoenix were allowed to tag along and what they collected was theirs. People with their own transportation borrowed my generator and our suction pump and retrieved their own fuel. This allowed them to move around and find their own generator and suction pump. Some found solar panels and batteries, just nothing that worked in Phoenix. Some found wind turbines. They put in electricity and eventually put in another well and a communal septic system.

Don't get me wrong; we always had a little work that a man could do to earn food for his family, fuel for his vehicle, ammo for his gun, etc. If you don't like the way I treated Poor Bert, just remember, I didn't take the cap off the bottle or pour the booze. I did wait until he hurt bad enough that he was willing to ask for help. I didn't lecture him or tell him he had to do this or do that. I simply asked him a question, *Had enough?* I had the hypo ready to go, the morphine had come from a pharmacy back when the terrorists attacked. So had the PDR and it only took a minute or two to figure out the correct dose based on his weight, and I had a syringe ready to go. Derek administered the shot, he had more practice than I did. I had learned giving shots the hard way when Lorrie was young and needed allergy shots. That didn't make it any easier to give myself shots when the time came to start taking insulin, but I learned.

We treated those people exactly the way I had treated Poor Bert. The Welfare Department was in Flagstaff and Prescott, but the offices were closed. Dad had a sign that said: *This is a Non-Profit Business; We didn't start out that way...* So the 3 of us put a sign that said: *The welfare office is in Prescott or Flagstaff and so is the Salvation Army. Knock on the door if you need work.* And, by the way, coming to our little meetings was Bert's idea. On January 1, 2009, I had 10 years and in April of 2009 Ron had 17 years and Clarence had 25 years. Nobody gave us the time, we earned every day. 10 years is 3,652 days, and exactly 20 years is 7,305 days but who is counting?

Fortunately Ron and Clarence and their families liked zucchini, etc. So did most of the people in my family. Walton Feed sold a #10 can of heirloom seeds called the Garden Seed Pack for 14.95 or 79.75 a case of 6. The can contained the following seed packages: 1 Tomato 1 Carrot 1 Squash 1 Cabbage 1 Spinach 4 Beans 4 Peas 1 Onion 4 Corn 1 Zucchini 1 Beet 1 Swiss Chard 1 Cucumber 1 Lettuce 1 Radish 1 Pepper. I added a few things on my own that I liked including: Cantaloupe, Acorn Squash, Butternut Squash, Spaghetti Squash, Popcorn, Potatoes – Russets and Yukon Gold, Sweet Potato, Pumpkin, and Watermelon. Shirley grew herbs in her kitchen bay window arboretum. Derek was partial to okra, but I wanted nothing to do with it. Chard is a beet grown for the greens.

We had other things to harvest too like asparagus, wild mushrooms and so forth. Wild mushrooms frightened me and only after other people ate them and didn't die would I try them. I can't tell a mushroom from a toadstool. Neither could a few people in cemeteries. Ability to recognize and identify the commoner toadstools is of some practical interest and importance. Some, for example, the Mushroom, Chantarelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) and Truffle (*Tuber spp.*) are greatly esteemed for their culinary virtues; the orange-colored toadstools with yellow milky juice of the Saffron Milk Cap or Delicious Lac-

tarius (*Lactarius deliciosus*) were valued as food in the ancient world and are mentioned by Pliny; many others are edible, if of less outstanding merit; a few are injurious or even violently poisonous. Of these last, the scarlet Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*) with a nearly related species, the Death Cap or Death's Angel fungus (*Amanita phalloides*) with a pale greenish-yellow cap, common and abundant species about pine and birch trees and in woodlands formed by them, are two of the most notorious. The toadstools of both these species, especially those of the latter, contain virulent poisons and if cooked and eaten in the fresh condition, are among the most deadly and dangerous poisons known; the Panther Agaric, *Amanita pantherina*, a toadstool with a brown spotted cap, is also common in such woodlands and also poisonous. It is interesting to note that the fleshy caps of these poisonous toadstools are eaten with impunity by slugs. We harvested Morels back in Iowa. I'll eat those.

When was the first time you ever ate a mushroom? For some people it was probably the first time they ate a pizza. There was a list of things I hadn't eaten as a child, like shrimp, mushrooms, etc. If it didn't grow in an Iowa field, I was probably in high school before I ever tasted a lot of things.

They grow cantaloupe in Muscatine, Iowa and the grocers' used to put up signs that said Musc. Melons. I didn't know they were also called cantaloupes until years later; I always called them Muskmelons. The muskmelon (*Cucumis melo*), like watermelon, is hardly a vegetable, but it is an important truck and garden crop. There is a tendency in America to refer to muskmelons merely as "melons," but that is confusing because watermelons are also loosely called "melons." The most popular type of muskmelon in America is the small, oval, heavily netted kind commonly called a cantaloupe. *All cantaloupes are muskmelons, but not all muskmelons are cantaloupes.* Muskmelons have a wide range of other forms, sizes, and flesh qualities, such as the Honey Dew, Casaba, and Persian types; the large Bender, Montreal, and such odd varieties as the elongated Banana should not be called "cantaloupes." Do you know how many times people have corrected me and said they weren't muskmelons, but cantaloupes?

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So we're eating but the garden didn't do so very good in 2009. We were smart allowing people to move into those extra singlewide mobile homes, too. We sort of put them in a rectangle around our 3 homes, 1 layer, then 2 layers and finally 3 layers deep. The newer you were to the survival community the greater was your risk – from the MZB's. Cut down on the wind, too. Cold? It's cold most of the time; it's a nuclear winter folks, Carl Sagan was about ½ right. Well, maybe a little more than ½ now that I think about it. Don't talk to me about cold, I've been there, done that and have the scars to prove it.

We didn't build the wall surrounding the little housing area, the new tenants did. Technically our parcel was about 2 hectares or just a little over and it was nearly square so it was about 467' square. It was actually about 440' x 496' but it was close to square. Five acres isn't exactly what one would call a farm or a ranch. Especially since there were 2 homes, a cabin, a travel trailer, a barn, a pasture, the gardens and 10 singlewide mobile

homes squeezed into the 5 acres. And, don't forget the woodpiles, our tanker, our propane truck, stagecoach, wagons or plow, etc. We were very cozy, indeed. The place looked like a dang junkyard. And Amy's big dog, Baby, didn't like anybody she didn't know, so it was fair to say we even had a junkyard dog. (Bad, Bad Leroy Brown by Jim Croce)

What A Feeling
Irene Cara

First when there's nothing
but a slow glowing dream
that your fear seems to hide
deep inside your mind.

All alone I have cried
silent tears full of pride
in a world made of steel,
made of stone.

Well, I hear the music,
close my eyes, feel the rhythm,
wrap around, take a hold
of my heart.

What a feeling.
Bein's believin'.
I can have it all, now I'm dancing for my life.
Take your passion
and make it happen.
Pictures come alive, you can dance right through your life.

Now I hear the music,
close my eyes, I am rhythm.
In a flash it takes hold
of my heart.

What a feeling.
Bein's believin'.
I can have it all, now I'm dancing for my life.
Take your passion
and make it happen.
Pictures come alive, now I'm dancing through my life.
What a feeling.

Bein's believin' is what it's all about these days. Like I said, The Three Amigos, thank you Fleataxi, will live forever, even if we all die tomorrow. And that isn't going to happen

because once they built the stockade fence we added blockhouses in the corners and over the gate and equipped them. That's where the heavy crew served weapons came into their own. And the new residents included veterans from various wars and we didn't really have any problems finding weapons crews. You just knew The Three Amigos had to have a fort, right? What exactly is a pedestal mount anyway? Global Security used to say:

This gun may be mounted on ground mounts and most vehicles as an anti-personnel and anti-aircraft weapon. Associated components are the M63 antiaircraft mount and the M3 tripod mount. The M2 .50 Cal. flexible version is used as a ground gun on the M3 tripod mount or various Naval mounts. The M2 .50 Cal., M48 turret type, fixed type, and soft mount are installed on mounts of several different types of combat vehicles and ships. The weapon provides automatic weapon suppressive fire for offensive and defensive purposes. This weapon can be used effectively against personnel, light armored vehicles; low, slow flying aircraft; and small boats.

The M2 machine gun on the M3 tripod provided a very stable firing platform. Together with its slow rate of fire and its traversing and elevating mechanism, the M2 was used to a very limited extent as a sniper weapon during the Vietnam War at fixed installations such as firebases. Snipers pre-fired the weapons at identifiable targets and worked the data into range cards insuring increased first-round accuracy. The 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division constructed 20-30 foot high shooting platforms, adding steel base plates and posts to further stabilize the M2 on the M3 tripod. Together with the use of Starlight night vision scopes, the M2 severely limited enemy movement within 900 yards (800m) of the perimeter of a firebase. I know because I copied it and printed it out on the LaserJet 9000.

Hell, when we went to Barstow back after the terrorist attacks, we didn't really know what we were doing. We grabbed M3 tripods, M4 pedestal mounts and anything we could carry including AN/PVS-4's and AN/PVS-7's plus some AN/PVS-10s, some AN/PVS-14s and some AN/TVS-5s but only 2 AN/PVS-27s. I got that Mk 15 because I couldn't find a M107. Didn't realize at the time I'd chosen the better rifle. We didn't know if we'd ever get another shot at the depot or at any more of the M1114 vehicles. We had the cradles for the Mk 19 and all the mounting crap we could ever use and more. But we had to dump the M1114 vehicles and never got a shot at any more, dammit.

Anyway, that sort of made setting up raised firing platforms, which we called blockhouses, sort of a snap. I pulled out a copy of some of my stories and we had one hell of a good time with all of the things I'd dreamed up over my writing career. I wasn't any Albert Einstein, but at one time or another, I dreamed up every possible arrangement. In the end, a lot of it was impractical, but we had fun trying the different arrangements out. We didn't turn out to be particularly short of advice. These MZB's might end up be SOL, if you know what I mean, when they finally did get around to showing up. I wouldn't mind having those M1114's back but they sort of nuked Barstow with something, or so I heard. It was an awful long danged way to drive just to find out if the rumor were correct. It wasn't exactly like we had a jillion gallons of fuel you know.

Those AN/PVS-10s turned out to be very special for two reasons. One, they were 8.5X day/night scopes, Gen. III. Two, they cost about double what a fully tricked out Super Match M1A rifle cost; so, I put one on my Loaded.

I mean hell, we didn't find any more Chevron tankers besides the double bottom rig we traded that trucker out of and it took us a while to find more good tractors and trailers. Which, or course, became our warehouses until we ran out of parking room. It was only 5 acres and the animals needed a little pasture even though we were mostly feeding them alfalfa hay and whatever bagged animal feed we found in the outlying Greater Phoenix area that wasn't radioactive or spoiled. And the people didn't want to call it The Ark II either even after I let them read all of my stories, such as they were. They sort of adopted the name of Fort Mayer. I was hoping for Ft. Apache and Clarence was hoping for Ft. Huachuca, but the names were taken.

We screwed the pouch on the trip to Barstow you know. We didn't pick up any of the M14, M16 or M18 mines. It wasn't because we didn't try; it was because we couldn't find them. Had we gone to the Marine Corp Depot now, we would have confirmed the rumor. The Chinese had targeted most of the major US Depots and Arsenals. I can only assume that they knew what Napoleon learned; an Army travels on its stomach. They also took out Independence, Missouri using a 5mT warhead. The heading from Independence to Charles City is 17.2° and the distance is 288 miles. If a 1mT weapon would put about 90R/hr in Charles City, what would a 5mT bomb do? It was something to think about. They wouldn't be growing any crops in Charles City for a very long time. When you think about it, that movie, *The Day After* understated the problem.

Before it was all said and done, some of us would end up sleeping in the shelters for the 700 nights, but we didn't know about that, at the time. At least those of us that were still of childbearing age. Those of us that weren't having any more children for one reason or another didn't bother. We were below the maximum daily dose of radiation so we said to hell with it. The maximum hourly dosage without ill health effects is ~100mR/hr. We were neighborly and let the new residents use the shelters and the tunnels, for sleeping.

"Why won't they call this place The Ark?"

"Hell, I don't know. Maybe because it isn't outside of Pueblo, Colorado? What's the difference, I used that name in the first story I ever wrote?"

"Ark II would have been nice," Clarence suggested, "Or Ft. Huachuca."

"That reminds me, Clarence, I picked up a present for you the last time we went to Phoenix."

"What is it?"

Read the description on the box out loud.”

“1873 SPRINGFIELD CAVALRY CARBINE The classic US Cavalry carbine of the Old West era was undoubtedly the 1873 ‘Trapdoor’ Springfield. Designed at the Springfield Armory, the Model 1873 utilized the new, more powerful .45-70-405 Government cartridge. The legendary 7th Cavalry received its first shipment of 1873 carbines in June of 1874 to replace its aging Civil War Spencer carbines and Sharps conversions. By that fateful day of June 25th, 1876, most of Custer’s troopers were armed with the 1873 ‘Trapdoor’ when Sioux and Cheyenne forces overran them. The 1873 Springfield continued to serve through all the Indian campaigns on into the Spanish-American War near the turn of the century. Manufactured by Davide Pedersoli, this replica has a blued lock plate and barrel, case hardened breechblock, walnut stock, and saddle bar with ring. Bbl. Length: 22”; O.A.L.: 40½”; Weight: 7 lbs.; Caliber: .45-70 Government.”

“Like it?”

“Did you get .45-70 ammo?”

“Quite a lot actually. You probably have enough to kill all of the Sioux and the Apaches.”

“Did you get me one too?”

“Nope, they only had one, Ron. What I really want to see is Clarence riding a horse with his Trapdoor and reins in one hand and trying to blow the bugle with the other.”

“You are mean.”

“Occasionally, yes.”

“Gary give you your Springfield, Clarence?” Bert asked.

“Yea, ain’t it a honey?”

“I got a scabbard for the rifle and a set of cavalry saddlebags for you. Do you really have a uniform?”

“I’ll be right back,” Clarence said.

“Oh, a Top Soldier, huh? I guess you did have a uniform.”

“Actually, I have 3; you wouldn’t want me wearing a dirty uniform, would you? Sergeant Major Clarence Floyd, at your service.”

“Clarence, you’re going to need to change one thing.”

“What?”

“Bugler’s were probably privates. You can either be the bugler or the Top Soldier, you can’t be both.”

“Couldn’t play the danged thing anyway.” (aka sour grapes)

“Ron, are you going to give Clarence his other present?”

“What do you have for me, Ron?”

“A Vaquero with a 7½” barrel.”

“I could kiss you.”

“Don’t you dare, we’re in Arizona now, not California.”

“Just one thing Clarence.”

“What’s that?”

“When the MZB’s attack, use the other Springfield rifle, not the Trapdoor.”

o

God must have heard Ron. They attacked the next day. It started out with a pickup pulling close to the fire road and parking. A couple of men got out, walked behind the pickup and started glassing Ft. Mayer. We didn’t post security; we just kept the gate to the fort closed. Derek was checking the weapons, one at a time making sure there was enough ammo and they hadn’t collected any sand. He noticed the pickup from the blockhouse. He got a pair of field glasses and looked them over. Apparently he didn’t like what he saw.

Our system had never been tried before, but it worked better than expected. The logs were dropped across the gate and people started to take up positions on the ramparts. No alarm was given, that wasn’t the system. Most people were armed with M16’s or their own AR’s. Of all of our calibers of ammo, we had the most 5.56x45mm. The fort was deceptive to the casual observer. It looked like an old-fashioned log fort. It was, on the outside. On the inside, we’d struggled to install street plates. You know the ones – 1” steel plates they use to cover holes? The ramparts were 8’ tall with firing ports. We thought it was stupid to shoot over the top of a rampart.

Everyone just sat down in a folding chair and waited for the fun to begin. There was smoke to the east, Mayer must be burning. They came in school buses and there were a lot of them. Not enough to encircle the fort, however. Each blockhouse had two weapons. The third Mk-19 was in the extra blockhouse over the gate. The logs had been soaked in fire retardant, they couldn’t burn us out. We didn’t see any heavy weapons,

just a lot of AR's, hunting rifles, and shotguns. I wouldn't attack what could be a possibly heavily defended fort with anything short of a tank. Derek pointed to the guy who seemed to be in charge. He was being careful and was standing back about 800-yards, leading from the rear. Have you ever seen what a .50 Raufoss cartridge does to a man who is only standing 800-yards away? It wasn't pretty. The Tac-50 was 'silenced' and sounded more like a 7.62. The idiots came at us head on when the shot rang out. We let them get to within 100-yards...

"How many of them were there?"

"I'm not sure anyone counted the bodies. We need to go into Mayer and see if anyone in town made it through. I saw smoke before the shooting started."

"We don't have room to move them all into the fort, you know."

"Let's wait and see how many people survived, we might."

The bad news was we did. No one had been in town in over a week. One of the survivors said that the MZB's had been in town 4 days and the only reason they knew the fort was there in the first place was because they heard Derek test firing the guns. They sent two people ahead to scout the fort and torched the town. Less than 200 out of the approximate 1,000 people who lived in Mayer before the attack survived. When we finished burying the bad guys, we sent the equipment to town.

"This isn't going to cut it Gar-Bear. We need some way to stop people before they can get close enough to the fort to do us real damage."

"They didn't do us any real damage this time, Ron. 3 wounded, none killed. A pretty successful defense, in my humble opinion."

"How did anyone get wounded? I thought the fort was bulletproof."

"The fort yes, the blockhouses, no. It's only bulletproof against .30 caliber fire or smaller anyway. And I'm not so sure that .30 caliber AP might not punch through the steel plate. I'm fairly positive that anyone with a .50 caliber rifle and AP ammo would turn the fort into Swiss cheese."

"What can we do about that, Gary? Ron, do you have any ideas?"

"If I were to do a cost benefit analysis, I'd say that..."

"Cut the crap."

"To continue, ...there is nothing we can do that we haven't done already."

“What I want to know is where is the friggin’ government? How come they aren’t stopping this gang of killers before they hit small communities?”

“I don’t know the answer to your question partner, but I’ll remind you to be careful what you wish for.”

“What do you mean, Gary?”

“The last big piece of legislation that Congress enacted was the revised USA Patriot Act. I don’t know about the two of you, but I rue the day that the government ever tries to enforce that law. I don’t really believe it will be a problem, however. I don’t know how many weapons the Chinese used on us, but from the sounds of the things I’m hearing on the Ham bands, we’ve been thrown back into the Dark Ages, literally and figuratively.”

“Won’t the country pull itself up by the bootstraps and recover?”

“We’ll all be dust before that happens. We hadn’t recovered from those 1mT bombs the terrorists used and they only used 12. We’re talking about 90R as far out from ground zero as 250 miles from the 1mT bombs. The Chinese used 2mT and 5mT warheads and 3mT bombs. I have no idea how many, but you can bet they used all they had. You have noticed that our background radiation is around 50mR haven’t you? What’s it been, for the better part of a year, right? It went down to 50mR and stopped falling off. This country could be radioactive for 100-300 generations.”

Through the release of atomic energy, our generation has brought into the world the most revolutionary force since prehistoric man’s discovery of fire.

This basic force of the universe cannot be fitted into the outmoded concept of narrow nationalisms. For there is no secret and there is no defense; there is no possibility of control except through the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world. We scientists recognize our inescapable responsibility to carry to our fellow citizens an understanding of atomic energy and its implication for society. In this lies our only security and our only hope – we believe that an informed citizenry will act for life and not for death. – A. Einstein, Jan 22, 1947

If used in numbers, atomic bombs not only can nullify any nation’s military effort, but also can demolish its social and economic structure and prevent their re-establishment for long periods of time. With such weapons, especially if employed in conjunction with other weapons of mass destruction such as pathogenic bacteria, it is quite possible to depopulate vast areas of the earth’s surface, leaving only vestigial remnants of man’s material works. – Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Operations Crossroads, June 30, 1947

Bankrupt – Chapter 10

Note: This chapter is more information than story. However, some of the information is very interesting.

The frightening prospect of nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists has been in the public mind ever since the publication of *The Curve of Binding Energy* by John McPhee in 1973 (and its predecessor articles in the *New Yorker* the year before). Before that time it was widely perceived that the construction of an atomic bomb – developed by the Manhattan Project in World War II – required a Manhattan Project scale effort to create.

McPhee's book recounted the experiences and views of Ted Taylor, an early nuclear weapon designer, who disputed this idea. Taylor pointed out that although the production of the essential materials of atomic weapons – fissile highly enriched uranium and plutonium – does require huge investments of money and technology, once these investments have been made and the fissile materials are available in quantity then the barriers to manufacturing highly destructive bombs is dramatically lower. Beginning in the late 60s Taylor made it his crusade to raise awareness of this fact so that steps could and would be taken to prevent a future catastrophe.

Near the end of *The Curve of Binding Energy* Taylor and McPhee visit the World Trade Center, and Taylor provides an extended reflection on what effect a crude nuclear bomb would have on the towers.

We looked up at the west wall of the nearer tower. From so close, so narrow an angle, there was nothing at the top to arrest the eye, and the building seemed to be some sort of probe touching the earth from the darkness of space. "What an artifact that is!" Taylor said, and he walked to the base and paced it off. We went inside, into a wide, uncolumned lobby. The building was standing on its glass-and-steel walls and on its elevator core. Neither of us had been there before. We got in an elevator. He pressed, at random, 40.

Walking to a window of the eastern wall, he looked across a space of about six hundred feet, past the Trade Center tower, to a neighboring building, at 1 Liberty plaza.

"Through free air, a kiloton bomb will send a lethal dose of immediate radiation up to half a mile," he went on. "Or, up to a thousand feet, you'd be killed by projectiles. Anyone in an office facing the Trade Center would die."

He pressed up against the glass and looked far down the plaza between the towers...

"There's no question at all that if someone were to place a half-kiloton bomb on the front steps where we came in, the building would fall in the river."

The trauma of September 11, 2001 provides an intimate yardstick to judge the enormity of the catastrophe that would have resulted if the attack had instead been conducted with a nuclear bomb.

By New York City official count, as of 18 April 2002, 2825 people perished in the destruction of the World Trade Center. There were perhaps 30,000 people in the twin towers at the time of the first collision. At peak occupancy the two buildings have had held up to 60,000 people. Even a crude nuclear explosive, with an explosive force of a few hundred tons, would have left no survivors in either building, would have killed similar numbers elsewhere in the surrounding area, and injured hundreds of thousands more.

Though such a device is small by nuclear weapon standards, there is no urban megastructure in the world that can withstand the explosion. High-rise urban centers throughout the world remain equally vulnerable to such attacks, just as the rest of Lower Manhattan remains today.

Weapons of Total Destruction

Many might remember the Neutron bomb which, when exploding, leaves buildings and roads intact while showering life on earth with lethal doses of neutron radiation. This way an enemy can kill all life within a zone and take possession of a city and all of its content. Dreadful, is it not, but not the Doomsday weapon conceived of in 1950 – the Cobalt Bomb.

In the light of the current talks in China with North Korea, let us reflect on the awesome power of destruction we have brought into existence.

The Cobalt Bomb is capable of wiping out life on earth. It explodes and emits long-lasting and lethal gamma radiation, the most energetic radiation in the electromagnetic spectrum. Has the Cobalt Bomb been constructed? If it has, then it is part of a classified arsenal of weapons, but who would want to unleash a weapon of such destructive power that none who inhabit the earth would survive? Perhaps only those who can take refuge in a deep underground Ark.

From the Encarta Encyclopedia...

The Hydrogen Bomb or H-bomb, weapon deriving a large portion of its energy from the nuclear fusion of hydrogen isotopes. In an atomic bomb, uranium or plutonium is split into lighter elements that together weigh less than the original atoms, the remainder of the mass appearing as energy. Unlike this fission bomb, the hydrogen bomb functions by the fusion, or joining together, of lighter elements into heavier elements. The end product again weighs less than its components, the difference once more appearing as energy. Because extremely high temperatures are required in order to initiate fusion reactions, the hydrogen bomb is also known as a thermonuclear bomb. The first thermonuclear bomb was exploded in 1952 at Enewetak by the United States, the second in 1953 by Russia (then the USSR). Great Britain, France, and China have also exploded

thermonuclear bombs, and these five nations comprise the so-called 'nuclear club' nations that have the capability to produce nuclear weapons and admit to maintaining an inventory of them. The three smaller Soviet successor states that inherited nuclear arsenals (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus) relinquished all nuclear warheads, which have been removed to Russia. Several other nations either have tested thermonuclear devices or claim to have the capability to produce them, but officially state that they do not maintain a stockpile of such weapons; among these are India, Israel, and Pakistan. South Africa's apartheid regime built six nuclear bombs but dismantled them later.

The presumable structure of a thermonuclear bomb is as follows: at its center is an atomic bomb; surrounding it is a layer of lithium deuteride (a compound of lithium and deuterium, the isotope of hydrogen with mass number 2); around it is a tamper, a thick outer layer, frequently of fissionable material, that holds the contents together in order to obtain a larger explosion. Neutrons from the atomic explosion cause the lithium to fission into helium, tritium (the isotope of hydrogen with mass number 3), and energy. The atomic explosion also supplies the temperatures needed for the subsequent fusion of deuterium with tritium, and of tritium with tritium (50,000,000 and 400,000,000, respectively). Enough neutrons are produced in the fusion reactions to produce further fission in the core and to initiate fission in the tamper.

Since the fusion reaction produces mostly neutrons and very little that is radioactive, the concept of a 'clean' bomb has resulted: one having a small atomic trigger, a less fissionable tamper, and therefore less radioactive fallout. Carrying this progression further would result in the suggested neutron bomb, which would have a minimum trigger and a nonfissionable tamper; there would be blast effects and a hail of lethal neutrons but almost no radioactive fallout; this theoretically would cause minimal physical damage to buildings and equipment but kill most living things. The theorized cobalt bomb is, on the contrary, a radioactively "dirty bomb having a cobalt tamper. Instead of generating additional explosive force from fission of the uranium, the cobalt is transmuted into ^{60}Co , which has a half-life of 5.26 years and produces energetic (and thus penetrating) gamma rays. The half-life of ^{60}Co is just long enough so that airborne particles will settle and coat the earth's surface before significant decay has occurred, thus making it impractical to hide in shelters. This prompted physicist Leo Szilard to call it a "doomsday device since it was capable of wiping out life on earth."

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The idea of the cobalt bomb originated with Leo Szilard who publicized it in Feb. 1950, not as a serious proposal for weapon, but to point out that it would soon be possible in principle to build a weapon that could kill everybody on earth. To design such a theoretical weapon a radioactive isotope is needed that can be dispersed worldwide before it decays. Such dispersal takes many months to a few years so the half-life of ^{60}Co is ideal.

The ^{60}Co fallout hazard is greater than the fission products from a U-238 blanket because many fission-produced isotopes have half-lives that are very short, and thus de-

cay before the fallout settles or can be protected against by short-term sheltering; many fission-produced isotopes have very long half-lives and thus do not produce very intense radiation; the fission products are not radioactive at all.

The half-life of ^{60}Co on the other hand is long enough to settle out before significant decay has occurred, and to make it impractical to wait out in shelters, yet is short enough that intense radiation is produced.

Initially gamma radiation fission products from an equivalent size fission-fusion-fission bomb are much more intense than ^{60}Co : 15,000 times more intense at 1 hour; 35 times more intense at 1 week; 5 times more intense at 1 month; and about equal at 6 months. Thereafter fission drops off rapidly so that ^{60}Co fallout is 8 times more intense than fission at 1 year and 150 times more intense at 5 years. The very long-lived isotopes produced by fission would overtake the again ^{60}Co after about 75 years.

Zinc has been proposed as an alternate candidate for the “doomsday role”. The advantage of ^{64}Zn is that its faster decay leads to greater initial intensity. Disadvantages are that since it makes up only half of natural zinc, it must either be isotopically enriched or the yield will be cut in half; that it is a weaker gamma emitter than ^{60}Co , putting out only one-fourth as many gammas for the same molar quantity; and that substantially amounts will decay during the world-wide dispersal process. Assuming pure ^{64}Zn is used, the radiation intensity of ^{65}Zn would initially be twice as much as ^{60}Co . This would decline to be equal in 8 months, in 5 years ^{60}Co would be 110 times as intense.

Militarily useful radiological weapons would use local (as opposed to world-wide) contamination, and high initial intensities for rapid effects. Prolonged contamination is also undesirable. In this light ^{64}Zn is possibly better suited to military applications than cobalt, but probably inferior to tantalum or gold. As noted above ordinary “dirty” fusion-fission bombs have very high initial radiation intensities and must also be considered radiological weapons.

No cobalt or other salted bomb has ever been atmospherically tested, and as far as is publicly known none have ever been built. In light of the ready availability of fission-fusion-fission bombs, it is unlikely any special-purpose fallout contamination weapon will ever be developed.

The British did test a bomb that incorporated cobalt as an experimental radiochemical tracer (Antler/Round 1, 14 September 1957). This 1kt device was exploded at the Tadjie site, Maralinga range, Australia. The experiment was regarded as a failure and not repeated.

Well, let us hope that Doomsday Weapons are never built. With enough H-Bombs, we could come close to a D-Weapon. A Doomsday weapon would not be just a WMD, but a WTD (Weapon of Total Destruction).

Now that efforts for non-proliferation of these nuclear weapons are underway, and with more countries trying to get into the nuclear party, the doomsday cloud looms once again. Let us hope no nation anywhere on earth, threatens humanity with such WTDs.

The world we've made, as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far, creates problems we cannot solve at the same level of thinking. – Albert Einstein.

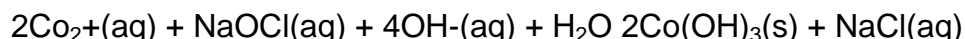
My God, what a steaming load of manure!!! The amount of Cobalt that would be required to cover the earth would be in the tons. Don't you people even take a minute to read these articles before posting them? Surface of the Earth: 5.1×10^8 km². Even if one gram of Cobalt covered one square kilometer, this means you would need 5.1×10^5 Kg of Cobalt. Taking the surface of the land mass only – 1.48×10^8 km², you would be required to deliver 1.48×10^5 Kg of Cobalt. Roughly 33.6 tons. Are you people kidding? Do you think that stuff grows on trees?

◦

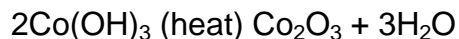
I guess the other fellow didn't agree with the author. Cobalt doesn't grow on trees; it is mined from the ground.

It is not normally necessary to make cobalt in the laboratory, as it is available readily commercially. Many ores contain cobalt but not many are of economic importance. These include the sulphides and arsenides linnaeite, Co₃S₄, cobaltite, CoAsS, and smaltite, CoAs₂. Industrially, however, it is normally produced as a byproduct from the production of copper, nickel, and lead.

Normally the ore is "roasted" to form a mixture of metals and metal oxides. Treatment with sulphuric acid leaves metallic copper as a residue and dissolves out iron, cobalt, and nickel as the sulphates. Iron is obtained by precipitation with lime (CaO) while cobalt is produced as the hydroxide by precipitation with sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl)



The trihydroxide Co(OH)₃ is heated to form the oxide and then reduced with carbon (as charcoal) to form cobalt metal.



Cobalt is available in many forms including foil, pieces, powder, rod, and wire. Well, he asked, didn't he?

◦

The use of cobalt or nickel alloys for added wear resistance was initiated in the early 1900s with the development of the cobalt-chromium-tungsten family of alloys. The cobalt alloys were called the Stellite because of their bright, shiny, nontarnished appearance. Further development and characterization of this alloy system established its usage in unlubricated metal-to-metal contact or erosion by high-velocity fluid or solid particulate impingement. Initially, the alloys were used as solid castings but later were applied by welding to tougher or more ductile substrates, hence the birth of the hardfacing industry. Many of the original Stellite compositions are still in use, but many others, including the nickel and iron alloys, have been developed for special applications or for use by newer application procedures. Examining the microstructural features and wear properties of these families of hardfacing alloys can help in choosing the right alloy for the job. Various cobalt and nickel alloys, their available product forms and the corresponding hardfacing methods, are reviewed in this article.

I found 28 cobalt suppliers and that was only one resource. I think everyone is stuck on stupid, Nevil Shute wrote *On the Beach* because he opposed the bomb. We all hope they'll never be used, but... it seems to be stuck on 50mR.

◦

Question 1: If they had built a cobalt bomb, they would have told us, right?

Question 2: Who is they?

◦

I sent the wife to the pharmacy to pick up a drug I needed. I even gave her the box so she would get EXACTLY the same drug. She didn't take the box with her and she called to confirm what I wanted. I told her. Exactly. She came home with the same compound, but a different formulation. I got a little irritated, like I was in geosynchronous orbit. What's the big deal, the label said the same thing that I wanted? I'll tell you and this might be important. Not all cold medicines are created equal. Some standard formulas of a drug might be one chemical while the timed-release version is a different chemical. Sudafed is so popular for making meth that the pharmacies now keep it behind the counter and you have to get it from the pharmacist. The timed-release stuff is on the shelf. Here is something I learned 15 years ago. Note the date on the article, that's interesting, too.

Oct. 25, 2004 – Don't switch from brand-name Dilantin to a generic version of the anti-seizure drug – or from generic to brand name, epilepsy specialists warn.

The warning comes after epilepsy patients at MINCEP Epilepsy Care, in Minneapolis, Minn., suddenly began having severe seizures. The patients' seizures previously had been kept under control with Dilantin treatment.

What happened? An investigation by Ilo E. Leppik, MD, MINCEP research director and professor of pharmacy at the University of Minnesota, found a clue. A change in State of

Minnesota health plans required the use of generic drugs instead of brand-name drugs. Without notifying their doctors, the health plans switched the patients from brand-name Dilantin to a generic version.

“We didn’t even know they had done this until we saw these developmentally delayed kids and adults coming into the clinic or emergency room with seizures,” Leppik tells WebMD. “It turned out all these kids had been switched from brand-name Dilantin to generic.”

Because they had a carefully kept record of the patient’s Dilantin blood levels, the researchers were able to compare the effects of the switch. Sure enough, the patients had much lower blood levels of the drug after switching to the generic version. Once they switched back, drug levels increased into a range that controls seizures. The findings appear in the October issue of *Neurology*.

Dilantin: A Tricky Epilepsy Drug

Dilantin, made by Parke-Davis, is the brand name for phenytoin (FEN-ih-toyn). For more than 50 years, it’s helped people with epilepsy keep their seizures under control. Doctors use it often – but it’s one of the trickiest drugs around, says Gregory L. Barkley, MD, chair of the Epilepsy Foundation’s professional advisory board and clinical vice chair of neurology at Detroit’s Henry Ford Hospital.

“The issue with phenytoin is it is the single most difficult anticonvulsant drug to use because it has very different metabolism than most medicines,” Barkley tells WebMD. “Small changes in dose result in wild swings in metabolism.”

The small differences between Dilantin and generic phenytoin can have big clinical effects.

“Given the nature of the thin margin between too much and too little phenytoin, I am not surprised switching from one brand to the other makes problems,” Barkley says.

Generic Not Bad, Just Different

Leppik says that for 15 years, one of his patients kept her epilepsy seizures under control with Dilantin. That suddenly changed.

“This year, she shows up in my clinic with two seizures,” he says. “She lost her driver’s license, and her blood levels of Dilantin were low. She said she’d been taking her medicine same as always. So I asked her, ‘Do your pills look different?’ She said, ‘Yes, but my pharmacist said it was the same thing, so don’t worry.’ We got her back on brand-name Dilantin, and now she is doing fine.”

Leppik and Barkley stress that brand-name Dilantin isn’t necessarily better than generic versions of the drug. It’s just different – and this difference may be important.

“My recommendation is if you’re on Dilantin, don’t switch. And if you’re on generic phenytoin don’t switch,” Leppik says. “Either way you can get into trouble. The worst is switching back and forth.”

Barkley says that while the cost of Dilantin is only a few cents a pill more than generic versions, most of his patients taking phenytoin are on generic versions of the drug. “In most cases, generic drugs are a good deal for the consumer,” he notes. “It is the best thing for keeping drug costs low.”

In the case of switching patients from Dilantin to generic phenytoin, however, any savings could be wiped out by a single trip to the emergency room.

“Switching from Dilantin to a generic version may be penny wise and pound foolish,” Barkley says.

Leppik advises people taking either Dilantin or generic phenytoin to pay attention when they’re at the drug store.

“The message here is to look carefully at your pills when you go to the pharmacy,” he says. “If you are taking Dilantin brand, be sure to continue. If you’re getting a generic brand of phenytoin, be sure to get same-looking generics.”

Meanwhile, Leppik and colleagues took their findings to the Minnesota state health authorities. They changed the rule requiring a switch to generic Dilantin.

ALL DRUGS AREN'T CREATED EQUAL. I love my wife dearly – but I ALWAYS read the label. Because I don't drive she usually goes to the store alone. This drug was important because I was taking the maximum dose and can handle that. She brought home the timed-release version, in this case the same drug, but 4 times stronger and timed release. If I hadn't read the label, I could have overdosed. I hope that she starts speaking to me soon. I've already apologized and explained. We'll see.

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The doctor said I needed a colonoscopy because I was bleeding internally. Fun exam, right? So, I had the exam and they didn't find anything, not even my brain. Now they wanted to come down from the top. I got the pictures of my 6 bleeding ulcers. We all know what I told the doctor was my problem before the exams, don't we? I told him I had a bleeding ulcer. I just didn't know it was a half dozen of them. So they gave me some prescription medicine, Carafate, liquid not the pills. \$135. Plus he wanted me on Nexium. We settled on Prevacid. I can probably get enough professional samples to solve my problem. If not, remember how much I told you it costs in one of my stories about a year ago. About \$5 a pill. A funeral would be cheaper. All those trips to get the tests gave me a cold.

Yes, I'm a butthead, I'm a trained and certified butthead who can read. My certified butthead certificate is right next to my PhD in sarcasm.

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I got to eat squash rather than green beans; the green beans didn't do too well the summer of 2009 because of the nuclear winter. Nothing in the garden did very well. The field where we planted the MZB's was doing well. Because of the persistent background radiation, we couldn't be certain of the milk the cow was producing so we made it into cheese and wouldn't let the children eat the cheese. We built a second compound at the fort and collected more singlewide mobile homes. We went scrounging for some industrial sized generators and came up with a 2Mw unit. It was diesel fueled and that meant we had to come up with more #2 diesel fuel. We thought we had a handle on everything. And then the government showed up.

"How many people do you have in this fort?" the Captain asked.

"Maybe 500."

"Are those government issue crew served weapons I see?"

"Yep."

"We're going to have to seize them."

"Captain, you can have the bullets, but not the guns."

"I have the authority to seize those weapons and move all of you people to a FEMA camp."

"Sure, but do you have enough men?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well... they're military weapons, so you'd know their capabilities, right? We have several Mk 19s and Ma Deuces and lots of ammo. We aren't willing to join your little parade. We couldn't find the Claymores when we went to Barstow after the terrorist attacks. But we did find plastic explosives and ball bearings in Phoenix on one of our foraging trips. One of our residents was EOD in the military. We found some Hellfire missiles at a military installation, too. Any other questions?"

"Your government expects compliance."

"They'll get over the disappointment. If they can't, they can kiss our butts. And Captain, did I mention that we have 12 M107s? Look at the towers."

Gulp.

“I’ll be back.”

“Why don’t you go chase down some MZB’s and not worry about us? We’re getting by ok. If we need help, we’ll let you know.”

“Is that man wearing a uniform?”

“The young one or the black fella?”

“Both. Either.”

“My son was an E-6 in the Arkansas National Guard. He likes to wear his BDU’s. The other fella was recently promoted from bugler to Top Soldier with the 10th Cavalry. He has a brand new Springfield rifle too.”

“That’s a Buffalo gun.”

“The Super Match M1A isn’t. Care for that cup of coffee now? Coffee is pretty hard to come by.”

“Real coffee?”

“Folgers’s mountain grown. We have Yuban, if you’d rather have Colombian.”

“This compound looks like a junkyard.”

“We have the dog to go with it, you know. Her name is Baby but she doesn’t like strangers.”

Bankrupt – Chapter 11

A whole lot of clowning around, right? Right. It was the end of the world, as far as we were concerned. What would you do in a similar situation? Crying about it wasn't going to make it any better. In time the atmosphere would clear and we could get better yields from our crops. We were getting very little information about WW IV in Europe. To date, they hadn't exercised the nuclear option. Use of nuclear weapons seemed to be limited to the Men who would be Kings. The 3 of us, being the community elders, struck a bargain with the military. They wouldn't attack us and we'd keep the bullets. This detachment was operating out of the Camp Navajo. It was about a company in strength. It was an infantry company, which meant that we were pretty evenly matched with them.

We didn't really have 500 people either. It was closer to 400 counting the nearly 200 that we'd moved in from Mayer. We didn't build a community building, in either compound. We had all of the weapons we'd collected after the MZB's attacked. Everyone in the fort old enough to carry a weapon had at least one firearm. Some of us had more. It had been hard to find the sheets of steel plate the first time. We needed more and that made it was even harder to find this time. However, every company that did work on roads, installing this or that, had a few plates. We pulled the north wall and moved it further north. While some people were scrounging more steel plate, others were installing utilities or looking for more singlewide trailers.

They were a lot of children so we built a park in the center of the second compound, actually more of an expansion, and moved in playground equipment from Mayer. Clarence spent days hand-lettering a sign that said: Ft. Mayer – new home of the 10th Cavalry. We fenced the area where we buried the MZB's and let the livestock roam. Good grass. One problem that we had was that the area didn't allow us to do anything to prevent another group from trying what the first group had tried. If we took out a bridge or something, they could just go around.

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“Don't say it, Ronald McDonald.”

“Say what?”

“Same stuff, different day.”

“We ought to find a better place to live, you know.”

“Why? We have a fort and people to help us protect our families. The persistent radiation level everywhere we have gone is about 50mR. I'm speculating that it's from isotopes in those weapons. Some of that crap lasts thousands of years.”

“That means that we're going to be living with a background radiation level near maximum daily exposure levels for a very long time, doesn't it?”

“I’m afraid so partner.”

“We’re going to need to do something about that, Gar-Bear. We have been letting everyone who is child bearing age sleep in the shelters. I think maybe were going to need to do something different.”

“Any ideas?”

“Concrete above-ground shelters with no windows. Limit daily exposures for all of the people we’re concerned about to 12 hours per day. We need to make a trip to Texas and see if Radmeters4U still has any of the certified dosimeters left. We have plenty of silver and gold and I’m sure that if anyone is around, we can work something out.”

“Thinking about the long-term, huh Ron?” Clarence asked.

“I’m thinking about my grandchildren Clarence. Does anyone have any idea what the long-term effect of living with a daily exposure of 1.2R will do? I sure as hell don’t. But whatever it is, it can’t be good.”

We found Gonzales on a map of Texas. It was on US 183 south of I-10. It was also east of San Antonio and south of Austin. This was a good thing; we’d go to Gonzales via El Paso. With any kind of luck, we might get some of that nice leather from El Paso Saddle Company. Once we were in Gonzales, it wouldn’t be that far to Laredo and Kirkpatrick Leather Company. We decided to take an empty semi in case we could pick up a few things along the way. We had a word with that Captain and explained what we were doing. He provided an M1114 and 4 soldiers to go along. We gave him 2 more cases of Yuban and several cartons of cigarettes for his troops.

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Real time: Costco is limiting cigarettes sales these days to 2 cartons of cigarettes. They also won’t sell you 2 different types of cold medicine at the same time. Sharon raised a really big stink, I guess she’s forgiven me – I gave her a copy of the article on Dilantin to read, and Costco sold her five cartons, this time. Next time, I’ll have to go along, I guess. I’m putting Costco on the top of my scavenging list, along with China-mart. It will probably come to scavenging when TSHTF, I’m just cautioning you. Gold and silver is nice, but you can’t get any nourishment from it. It is very possible that nourishment will come from the barrel of a gun, to hunt game, of course – far be it from me to suggest anything else.

How did I know about Dilantin? Lorrie took Dilantin for years. We always used the generic, but the pharmacy switched suppliers and we ended up going to the brand name product. We learned in the late 1980’s or early 1990’s all about what 2004 article talked about. Sometimes I have no doubt why they call it the practice of medicine. Anyone heard of Vioxx? A few weeks after that story broke, I happened to be talking to a Cele-

brex salesman. He claimed there was no problem with THEIR product. Right! Sometimes the cure is worse than the disease. Other times, there is no cure for the disease. The doctor lied; they didn't cut out any of my stomach. Hey Bert, here's the cliff. Nah, Bert is a good wrangler and sober.

This new story – Paradise – has all the makings of an excellent story. Hopefully the Doctor will share a little layman's medical knowledge for those of us who have an interest in such things. It seems rather evident that TSHTF soon in the story. His wife has that uneasy feeling and you know what that means, right? Katie bar the door – here come the Indians! Its ok, folks, Clarence has a replica Springfield Trapdoor carbine. So did Custer. Didn't do Custer any good, did they?

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By replacing the Prius' batteries with a more powerful array and recharging it using a standard electric outlet at home, engineers have enabled the hybrid to get more than 100 miles per gallon of gasoline. Co-owner Greg Hanssen now tools around Southern California in the bright blue plug-in Prius prototype. The car can deliver 150 to 180 mpg for up to 35 miles of low-speed, around-town driving and can average 70 to 100 mpg on longer trips at higher speeds.

The 10 oldest Americans are: 1. Elizabeth Bolden, Tenn. 114. Born Aug. 15, 1890; 2. Bettie Wilson, Miss. 114. Born Sept. 13, 1890; 3. Susie Gibson, Ala. 114. Born Oct. 31, 1890; 4. Grace Thaxton, Ky. 114. Born June 18, 1891; 5. M. Gladys Swetland, Pa. 113. Born April 18, 1892; 6. Moses Hardy, Miss. 112. Born Jan. 6, 1893; 7. Lydia Newton, Ariz. 112. Born March 23, 1893; 8. Edna Parker, Ind. 112. Born April 20, 1893; 9. Grace Jones, Va. 112. Born June 4, 1893; and, 10. Marion Higgins, Calif. 111. Born June 26, 1893.

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Before World War III, anyway. According to what news we could get on the radio, and it wasn't very much, Russia had avoided Western Europe completely and thus avoided a confrontation with the Germans. The Germans had seized most of Europe, again. England had little to offer the Germans and the Parliament didn't take sides. Instead, the UK declared itself to be neutral. It worked for the Swiss and it worked for the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom, after all, had about 160 nuclear weapons. The Germans now had about 350, of French design. They were deployed to the forces protecting the eastern border of Germany.

The Germans were good soldiers – no one ever doubted that. However, this time they weren't led by a madman. The Generals ran the German Army and the civilian government supported them and the country. There were many contributing factors to the Germans losing WW II, not the least of which was taking on Great Britain and Russia. The United States couldn't come to the rescue of the United Kingdom this time so the government did the prudent thing and avoided war. Can you imagine the British actually

going against one NATO partner, Germany, in favor of another, France? It was England's Treaty with Poland that got them involved in WW II. Moreover, the UK concluded that the Germans must have the French nuclear weapons as none of them were used. As the whole world with access to the Internet knew, France had more than twice as many nuclear weapons as Britain.

By restricting their activities to Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation had done nothing to antagonize the Germans. The Germans knew better than attack the Russians because Napoleon and Hitler had both gotten their behinds kicked. NATO members include the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and several other European nations, including some of the Eastern European nations. The Russian strategy was to cut a swath excising Eastern Europe at a time when Germans were otherwise occupied in Western Europe. Clever these Russians plus Russia had over 8,000 nuclear weapons, don't forget.

Before the end of the Cold War, the last Russian bomber project was the Tu-160 Blackjack. First flown in 1982, the Tupolev Tu-160 Blackjack was a counterpart to the American B-1A. Both share a similar configuration, but the Soviet designed bomber was about 30 percent larger and considerably faster. Its initial combat radius of 7300 km was estimated on a mission profile of subsonic high altitude cruise, transonic penetration at low altitude. The Blackjack had a conventional or nuclear free-fall bombing capability, but it had more often been associated with the AS-15 Kent cruise missile. The Blackjack was an extremely expensive aircraft, so with the economic crisis affecting the former Soviet Union, together with the relaxation in international tension, the Russians stopped building the Tu-160 at the 25 bombers then currently in service.

However, with the successful end run down Eastern Europe, Russian fortunes improved and they began building more of the Tu-160 bombers. Back on 18 September 2003, a Tu-160 crashed in Engels killing all 4 crewmembers and leaving the Russians with only 14 in their fleet. Now the Russians had 220 of an improved variant and the remaining 14 had been upgraded to the same specifications. It seemed that the Russians had suddenly come into a lot of oil, which they sold for the equivalent of \$32 (USD) per barrel.

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One or two US refineries had escaped destruction. They were back running, but weren't turning out much refined petroleum. The biggest problem was getting crude oil. It was only available from American sources now and there wasn't much of a system in place to account for the sale of their products, until the military showed up and nationalized one of the refineries, and then the other when they found out it was operating, too. The Army needed fuel for the remaining vehicles and aircraft; the Navy needed fuel for the Cruisers and Destroyers' turbines, the Carriers' aircraft; and, the Air Force needed fuel for its planes, etc. It was said to be a matter of National Security. Where have we heard that one before? It's always National Security when the military wants to do something they maybe shouldn't, like for example, steal your oil. At least we were open about our stealing, uh, resource reallocation. If there was no one there to claim ownership, we

borrowed it. We put Clarence charge of leaving the notes, but he said he couldn't find a pencil. We weren't any different than the US Supreme Court; they took your property too, these days, and gave it to someone else if they wanted it, usually Target or Wal-Mart; wait that was before WW III, wasn't it?

That Supreme Court decision wasn't responsible for WW III, but if the war hadn't happened, it might have started the 2nd American Revolution. And the bad news was that the Chief Justice had voted with the minority. It was mostly the Congress passing laws that the Supreme Court upheld that eroded the American Dream. In the year 2000, 9 people with the real voting power had decided the American election. Tricky Dicky didn't have anything on Dubya. That's not true, their dogs had different names but neither one of them was ever accused of any marital impropriety. Both of the President's with broken zippers were Democrats, LOL.

I believe that Microsoft now owns MapBlast and MapQuest. Guess what building only appears as a notation at MapBlast and not at all on MapQuest? Did you say the US Supreme Court Building? Right. I guess maybe Bill doesn't like the US Supreme Court. The terrorists showed the Court respect; they detonated the 1mT bomb on the east side of the Capitol. Perhaps they thought all of those old men and women were cold and needed a little warmth, they were always willing to accommodate. On the other hand, maybe it was just God's sense of humor. Nah...

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Nobody was at home in El Paso so we loaded up and hit some of the gun shops looking for Winchesters and other rifles and SAA revolvers in .45 Colt. Nobody was at home in Gonzales, either, but we left some Krugerrands, anyway. We took quite an assortment of odds and ends from that place. KI, dosimeters, chargers, survey meters, but only the calibrated stuff. Then we were off to Laredo. Got me one of those Laredoan rigs with the crossdraw holster for a Vaqueros with a 4⁵/₈" and a 7¹/₂" barrels. Also got a right hand holster for a 5¹/₂" barrel in case I found a Paladin rig in 7¹/₂". You knew I was going to do that and I didn't want to disappoint you. By the time our little group got back to Ft. Mayer, the trailer was full together with another tractor and trailer and we were pulling 8,000-gallons of gasoline and 24,000-gallons of diesel, less what we had used. It had been a pretty good trip reallocating resources. Those soldier boys had a trailer full of coffee, cigarettes and booze.

That was the last trip of the year, it was starting to get very cold and we had to cancel the Labor Day celebration. With 2 double bottom tankers with the capacity of 16,000 gallons each, we topped off the tanks, located another empty fuel trailer and picked up another 16,000 gallons of #2 diesel. The Cummins had a prime power rating of 2.435Mw and a continuous rating of 2.045Mw. It was a monster, weighing in at about 10 tons and it was a very thirsty setup. There was a multiyear supply in the Greater Phoenix area of propane. There was also a fair amount of diesel fuel. Some of those truck stops had storage capacities of tens or hundreds of thousands of gallons. We also figured that there had to be a fuel depot somewhere in to area. The problem was that with

the higher background radiation level in Phoenix, we couldn't spend a lot of time looking.

People used bottle gas for their kitchen stoves and sometimes the hot water heater. They either had a fireplace or installed one to provide heat. They got a share of the 2Mw of electricity from the huge generator. We had an entire National Forest to cut down for wood. We weren't doing ½ bad, everything considered. We also made sure the word got out that we'd kicked the MZB's butts. Mayer was an unincorporated town and got its law enforcement from a couple of Deputy Sheriff's. They'd been the first 2 men to die when the MZB's showed up. Like I said earlier, Derek was in charge of Security at Ft. Mayer. John was his assistant. After the MZB's attacked, all towers were manned 24/7 by a single lookout.

Ft. Mayer was coming together as another survivalist community. It might be more correct to describe the place as a community of survivors. We 3 elders didn't run the show, but were sort of an advisory group. All of the free space in the fort, except for our 5 acres, was being eaten up as the community grew. All of the other folks had formed some sort of neighborhood representative group. They even tried, once, to commandeer the heavy weapons as property of the community. We explained to them why they couldn't do that. Ron and I went to Flagstaff with another case of Yuban and the Captain came down and explained to them that the weapons were government property in the safekeeping of The Three Amigos.

Among the 200 survivors from town was a physician's assistant. He became our official doctor. Medical treatment at Ft. Mayer was most certainly at a premium. The nearest MD was all of the way up in Flagstaff or the doctor in Prescott. They both had nice hospitals, but most of the time our PA was all we needed. His wife had been a nurse before they'd gotten married.

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Over the winter Ron outlined his plans to replace all of the homes in Ft. Mayer with above ground shelters and he carefully explained why. We were going to build 14 of them ourselves whether the others did or not. We had our 3 families, 10 families of the next generation and good old Bert with his one-year chip coming up soon. We also wanted to replace the barn with another concrete structure. The contractor said we could use his forms to pour the walls. If everyone agreed on the same floor plan, he could build a set of forms to support the lid while it was being poured. The weather was marginally better and we spent much of the winter gathering materials for our new homes and the barn.

The small home was 36' square, the medium home 40' square and the large home 44' square yielding 1,296 ft², 1,600 ft² and 1,936 ft², respectively. They were 2 bedroom, 3 bedroom and 4 bedroom floor plans. The three of us opted for medium sized homes, all 14 of them. Bert, it seems, had a girlfriend these days. The construction was to be 10" of concrete everywhere, except the floor and if you wanted to cover your new home with

dirt, so much the better. The home wouldn't have any windows and only 2 doors, a front and a back. An L shaped barrier in front of the doors prevented most radiation from entering the homes.

We found a warehouse loaded with fluorescent fixtures, reducing our energy demands. We also found electric hot water heaters and a second generator. It was a diesel standby unit at a Phoenix hospital rated, again, in the neighborhood of 2Mw, continuous. It wasn't a Cummins (Kohler), but any port in a storm. Two generators were better than one because people didn't have to go without electricity when the town generator was serviced. Those generators burned around 200gph at 25% power and about 700gph at full load. We had 32,000 gallons of stabilized #2 diesel, not counting the 7,500-gallons in underground tank. We could use up our entire diesel supply in about in 45 hours, running one 2Mw unit at full capacity. We needed a better solution, like solar power and a large diesel storage tank.

Our first idea was to locate all of the solar panels and all of the deep cycle batteries we could find. Phoenix must have had 10,000 golf carts sitting around, all with deep cycle batteries. Our second idea was to make a run up and down I-10 and haul the tankers back, if they contained diesel fuel. We sent a man to Phoenix and told him to find that storage depot or not come back. We also implemented electrical rationing. Hard times call for hard measures. Then there was the matter of finding enough fuel stabilizer (PRI-D) to restore the diesel. We sent a tractor-trailer to Houston, Texas to get pails of PRI-D and PRI-G. We send crews to Phoenix, Tucson, Prescott and Flagstaff to find batteries, inverters and working solar panels.

We ended up short on everything, but not so short that we couldn't get by at 25% power on the generator, giving us about 6½ days on a load of diesel. We knew that PRI-D was available by the 5-gallon pail but not by the drum. It was mixed at a ratio of 1:2000; therefore a 16,000 tanker would require 4 gallons per 8,000-gallon tank. We developed a plan once we had a fleet of 10 tankers available. 10 tankers meant 160,000 gallons of diesel and that equaled 228 hours (9.5 days) at full power and 800 hours at 25% power (33days, 8 hours). Our man found the diesel storage depot and it had survived the attack. The trip to Houston and tracking down the PRI-D bottling plant yielded a trailer loaded to its (weight or volume) capacity with 5-gallon pails of PRI-D including 20 pails of PRI-G.

Not good, but better. The minute we could start building homes, we started at our 5 acres and then worked our way out to the perimeter of compound 1; and then turned our attentions to compound 2. By the fall of 2010, we had all of the homes constructed and many buried in a mound of optional soil. We had enough florescent fixtures to install one in every small room and two in every large room. Two florescent fixtures provide enough light for any room, unless you were trying to read. We suggested that they do their reading at the kitchen tables. Each new home was provided with a 100-amp, 240v electrical panel but only with one 50-amp fuse. There is more than one way to skin a cat.

While the new windowless homes might be a bit short on electricity, they had enough power to get by. They didn't really need to run an air conditioner, now did they? Especially after the homes were covered with soil. Maybe a small fire in the fireplace, but never an air conditioner. The generator ended up running at 25% of capacity using about 200 gallons an hour, giving us over 33 days' worth of fuel with our 160,000 gallons.

You do realize that just because you have a 50-amp or 100-amp service that doesn't mean that you use the full amperage, don't you? The single largest consumer of electricity in a home was the air conditioner. Perhaps the second was the furnace. We did however use electric hot water heaters (3rd largest user) and electric dryers (4th largest user). We only allowed the dryers to be used in the winter. We kept searching for solar panels because we had more battery capacity than we had panels to keep them charged. We concluded that the sky was clearing because we were getting more juice out of the solar panels.

People learned to shut off lights when they left a room. TV was back on the air on a limited basis but it didn't run when no one was watching. We moved the mobile homes to a field and parked them. They were free for the taking for anyone who wanted one. They were also locked up. We weren't inclined to create a little lover's lane with all of the empty trailers. To this point in time, we hadn't expanded the compounds. That was our project for the summer of 2011. While we no longer needed the shelters, they continued to be used until the last home went in. In order to complete the 4th row of homes, we built a few extra houses. Since the home took more square footage than the singlewide mobile homes, some of the residents in compound 1 found their new homes to be in compound 2. That was also where we built the extra houses.

Some joker proposed renaming the town Dometown. We shouted him down. Our pasture was big enough for the growing herd of horses and we derived some nominal income for Bert by running a horse stable. It was \$6 a month without feed or \$15 a month with feed. In this day and age that was pretty steep. However the horses sometimes got affectionate and we were going to need a larger pasture and to build a stable outside of the fort, or something.

We ended up with the 'or something' and when we rebuilt the fort using concrete, we extended the length quite a ways on the north end on the other side of compound 2. We managed to enclose the rich pasture where the MZB's were buried. The fort had concrete walls 12" thick and 18' high. The forms were 9' forms and to go any higher would have meant 27'. Concrete consists of cement, sand, aggregate and water. You can also add an accelerator to help it dry quicker and a hardener to make it harder. The fort was poured using 6 sack concrete, usually a road mix. Bert had recommended that we hold off on stables and barns until we'd figured out what we were going to do about getting a bigger pasture.

That worked out pretty well in the end. Still, we put in a concrete barn for our horses and cattle. One enterprising couple in Compound 2 took to raising chickens. Another started

raising hogs. It took the entire summer of 2011 to build the new fort. It was big enough that the 3 of us could saddle the horses and ride around visiting with the residents. Once the fort was complete, that same yard bird that wanted to call the place Dometown proposed changing the name from Ft. Mayer to The Castle. I carefully explained that the name was taken. He persisted. I was tired of his BS and nodded to Derek and John who escorted him from the meeting. Democracies don't really work all of the time. We had other issues to discuss and arguing with a crackpot was just wasting time.

In *Lights Out* the residents of that little community of survivors had screwed the pooch big time when somebody didn't take Jon out behind the courthouse and off him. Maybe that wasn't the point of that story, but I take lessons where I can find them. If they wanted a Democracy, they could start their own community and build their own fort. They could call it Dometown or The Castle or anything they wanted. They could do everything by committee, meaning they'd never accomplish anything. *In all the towns and all the cities, there are no statues to Committees.* I was big on quotations and I knew *that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely*, so it wasn't like that. Still someone had to be in charge and the fort was built around our 5 acres to begin with. When you get older, you learn to appreciate the other fella's viewpoint, unless he's a crackpot. You have learned that sometimes your best answer to a problem isn't half as good as someone else's suggestion. I never did see the crackpot at any more meetings, either. One bad apple...

During the summer of 2011, we stumbled on a warehouse of solar panels. Man, did that make a difference – let me tell you. They were 24-volt panels, not 48-volt panels, but it was just a different wiring setup. That warehouse had 24-volt inverters, too. When it was all said and done, we had 24 empty homes. Maybe 25, no one had heard from the crackpot since that last meeting. Derek and John investigated his disappearance. You use the foxes to guard your hen house, too, don't you?

The makeup of Europe had changed. There was the United Kingdom, United Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland and Russia. At least the number of countries had fallen, making it easier for geography lessons. It also seems that the Chinese had solved America's problems with illegal aliens, nobody wanted to come to the United States anymore. I'd have moved to Australia if I could, but on second thought, the British had tested the cobalt bomb in Australia, hadn't they? And Australia had some new gun laws...

We offered to move the Infantry Company from Flagstaff to Ft. Mayer, we had a lot of empty singlewide mobile homes now, but they declined our invitation. Shucks. And on the subject of calling the fort, The Castle, at least we knew why. It was that all of those shooting ports that looked like notches. George S. Patton would have been very displeased with Ft. Mayer. He claimed that fixed fortifications were monuments to man's stupidity. On the other hand, George S. Patton was dead and this was 2011. World War III and World War IV had been fought and everybody lost.

We traded a truckload of coffee and cigarettes for a truckload of M18 Claymore mines. Ours were homemade and we figured the real thing would probably work better. I dug out one of the stories and showed Derek and the EOD guy how I wanted them all wired up. We had to change the blockhouse setup because the fort was so wide 2 on the back and 3 on the front wouldn't cut it. We ended up with 4 on the back and 5 on the front instead. Through careful negotiations, we arranged to get some of those M242 25mm "Bushmaster" Chain Guns from some damaged Bradley IFV's.

The M242 25mm "Bushmaster" Chain Gun, manufactured by McDonnell Douglas, has a single barrel with an integrated dual-feed mechanism and remote ammunition selection. Either armor piercing (AP) or high explosive (HE) ammunition may be selected with the flick of a switch. The Gunner may select from single or multiple shot modes. The standard rate of fire is 200 rounds per minute, and has a range of 2,000 meters (depending on the ammunition used). A wide range of ammunition has been developed for this weapon, making it capable of defeating the majority of armored vehicles it is likely to encounter, up to and including some main battle tanks.

We limited our ammo request to PGU-25 High Explosive Incendiary and PGU-38/U Enhanced 25mm High Explosive Incendiary. The sabot ammo sometimes could jam if the nose cap came off the projectiles. We put in 5 of the M242 Chain Guns. They're big suckers, you know, and mounting them looked to be an engineering nightmare. The Navy provided the solution with the Mk 88 machine gun mounts, thereby turning the M242 into the M38 25mm machine guns. The 25mm Machine Gun System (MGS) Mk 38 is a 25mm automatic gun system that provides ownership with defensive and offensive gunfire capability for the engagement of a variety of surface targets. It is designed to provide close range defense against patrol boats, swimmers, floating mines, and various targets ashore including: enemy personnel, lightly armored vehicles and terrorist threats. One crewman is required for operation and two for maintenance.

Ok, bad guys, attack us now, we're ready for you this time. Nobody was going to get within 2,000-meters, this time. We figured the soldiers had enough coffee, cigarettes, booze and steaks that they'd never be able to respond if we needed them anyway. Ft. Defiance would have been a good alternative name, you know. However, there was already a town in Arizona named Ft. Defiance. It was in eastern Arizona on the Navaho Reservation, just a little ways north (~40 miles) of Lupton on I-40. At least that Captain understood bartering; he was pretty good at it. He and his Sergeant Major had a fondness for cigars. So, our Top Soldier got together with his Top Soldier and they worked out a little deal.

Clarence, you see, had cleaned out every cigar store he could find in the greater Phoenix area. At the time, we all thought he was crazy. It turned out that he was crazy like a fox. He even built a small room in his house, just to house the cigars. He kept the humidity a little high and eventually those cigars more or less rehydrated. We smoke some of the Churchill's seconds. Not half bad, for a cigar. I've only smoked a single Havana cigar in my whole life. It was very, very good.

Bankrupt – Chapter 12

To be totally honest, we weren't bankrupt anymore. Not with horses and beef to sell. We kept one of the male cattle intact and bought another unrelated bull from a rancher. We slowly increased our herd of cattle by only slaughtering the male cattle. If John Wayne could do it with a single bull and a bunch of Texas Longhorns, there wasn't any reason why we couldn't do the same, *Red River* (1948). The remake was good, but I liked the original. Our draft horses, this time, were Belgians. If they were good enough for my grandfather, they were good enough for us. We had 2 stallions and 6 mares, in the beginning all unrelated. They were affectionate, too I guess. We got a vet over from Prescott to geld the cattle and the horses. Two Morgan and two Belgian stallions were more than enough, thank you. We ended up turning the stallions out to pasture and only riding the mares and geldings. We didn't really like riding the stallions and we wanted them to save their energy for more important things.

"Nice," Ron observed.

"What's nice, Ron?"

"Having a background radiation of 50mR. Maybe we'll live longer."

"Ronald, haven't you heard? The Three Amigos are going to live forever. I don't know if we're going to be famous, infamous or just what, yet. But, we'll always be remembered."

"It don't seem right living in a house without no windows." Clarence remarked.

"Clarence, we've just cut our radiation exposure from 144R to 72R per 120 days. It will remain that way as long as we limit our exposure to no more than an average of 12 hours per day. Ron said that he didn't know what an exposure level of 288R per 120 days would do to the human body. I don't know that one either, and I'm not sure what he's talking about, but I agree with him that it can't be all good."

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Everyone who lives on this planet is constantly exposed to naturally occurring ionizing radiation (background radiation). This has been true since the dawn of time. The average effective dose equivalent of radiation to which a person in the United States is exposed annually is estimated to be about 350 millirem. (A millirem – mRem) is a unit that estimates the biological impact of a particular type of radiation absorbed in the body.)

Sources of background radiation include cosmic rays from the sun and stars; naturally occurring radioactive materials in rocks and soil; radionuclides (unstable radioactive counterparts to naturally stable atoms) normally incorporated into our body's tissues; and radon and its products, which we inhale. Radon exists as a gas and is present in soil from which it seeps into the air. Radon gets trapped inside buildings, especially if the ventilation is poor. Levels of environmental radiation depend upon geology, how we

construct our dwellings, and altitude. For example, radiation levels from cosmic rays are greater for people on airplanes and those living on the Colorado plateau. This low-level background radiation is a part of the earth's natural environment and any degree of risk associated with it has not been demonstrated to date.

We are also exposed to ionizing radiation from man-made sources, mostly through medical procedures. On the average, doses from a diagnostic x-ray are much lower, in -dose effective terms, than natural background radiation. Radiation therapy, however, can reach levels many times higher than background radiation but this is usually targeted only to the affected tissues. Besides extremely small amounts of ionizing radiation from color televisions and smoke detectors, there are small amounts of ionizing radiation in many building materials and mining and agricultural products, such as granite, coal, and potassium salt. People who smoke receive additional radiation from radionuclides in tobacco smoke.

Ionizing radiation can cause important changes in our cells by breaking the electron bonds that hold molecules together. For example, radiation can damage our genetic material (deoxy-ribonucleic acid or DNA) either directly by displacing electrons from the DNA molecule, or indirectly by displacing electrons from some other molecule in the cell that then interacts with the DNA. A cell can be destroyed quickly or its growth or function may be altered through a change (or mutation) that may not be evident for many years. However, the possibility of this inducing a clinically significant illness or other problem is quite remote at small radiation doses.

Our cells, however, have several mechanisms to repair the damage done to DNA by radiation. The efficiency of these repair mechanisms differs among cells and depends on several things, including the type and dose of radiation. There also are biological factors that can greatly modify the cancer-causing effects of large doses of radiation. The severity of radiation's effects depends on many other factors such as the magnitude and duration of the dose; the area of the body exposed to it; and a person's sex, age, and physical condition. A very large dose of radiation to the whole body at one time can result in death. Exposure to large doses of radiation can increase the risk of developing cancer. Because a radiation-induced cancer is indistinguishable from cancer caused by other factors, it is very difficult to pinpoint radiation as the cause of cancer in a particular individual.

Other effects of large doses of radiation include suppression of the immune system and cataracts. Certain tissues of a fetus, particularly the brain, are especially sensitive to radiation at specific stages of development. However, the children and grandchildren of the (Hiroshima and Nagasaki) atomic bomb survivors so far have shown no greater incidence of genetic problems than do unexposed populations.

The exposure of an unborn baby to radiation is referred to as prenatal radiation exposure. This can occur when the mother's abdomen is exposed to radiation from outside her body. Also, a pregnant woman who accidentally swallows or breathes in radioactive materials may absorb that substance into her bloodstream. From the mother's blood,

radioactive materials may pass through the umbilical cord to the baby or concentrate in areas of the mother's body near the womb (such as the urinary bladder) and expose the unborn baby to radiation.

The possibility of severe health effects depends on the gestational age of the unborn baby at the time of exposure and the amount of radiation it is exposed to. Unborn babies are less sensitive during some stages of pregnancy than others. However, unborn babies are particularly sensitive to radiation during their early development, between weeks 2 and 15 of pregnancy. The health consequences can be severe, even at radiation doses too low to make the mother sick. Such consequences can include stunted growth, deformities, abnormal brain function, or cancer that may develop sometime later in life. However, since the baby is shielded by the mother's abdomen, it is protected in the womb from radioactive sources outside the mother's body. Consequently, the radiation dose to the unborn baby is lower than the dose to the mother for most radiation exposure events.

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It's not going to happen here! Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl should make you think twice about saying that it's not going to happen here. There are maybe 100 active reactors in the United States. BTW, people who are allergic to iodine shouldn't take KI. Betadine is an iodine preparation and some people are sensitive to it. Anyone we know? Me, but I might be willing to risk it, it takes me 2 days to get the rash. I have several bottles of 100-capsules of 50mg Diphenhydramine. I even have 2 100-count bottles of 25mg Benadryl. What were the words to the song? If the left one doesn't get you, the right one will? I'm also allergic to every kind of tape they make, but it hasn't killed me, yet. Don't buy any; it's expensive, \$5 per 100 capsules. One 50mg capsule is what they usually give you in an emergency room.

What else can you use for allergies? Epinephrine, ACTH and Prednisone just to name 3; you can get a bee-sting kit with a prescription and it has 2 Epi-pens. ACTH is adrenocorticotrophic hormone. It is used to treat, among other things: Severe Inflammation of Nasal Lining due to an Allergy and Contact Dermatitis. Prednisone is a corticosteroid hormone (glucocorticoid). It decreases your immune system's response to various diseases to reduce symptoms such as swelling and allergic-type reactions. It is used to treat conditions such as arthritis, blood disorders, breathing problems, certain cancers, eye problems, immune system diseases, and skin diseases. It generally treats the same things as ACTH treats.

You shouldn't take Epinephrine if: You're dead – it's probably too late.

You shouldn't take ACTH if you have: Myasthenia Gravis, Wide-Angle Glaucoma, High Blood Pressure, Bacterial Infection that is not under control, Chronic Heart Failure, Heart Disease, Herpes Simplex Infection of the Eye, Herpes Simplex Infection, Inflammation of the Esophagus, Stomach Ulcer, Ulcer of the Duodenum, Ulcer from Stomach Acid, Burning Stomach, Ulcerated Colon, Diverticulitis, Infection caused by a Virus,

Surgical Joining of Two Parts of the Intestine, Liver Problems, Kidney Disease, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, Scleroderma, Osteoporosis, Recent Operation, Infection caused by a Fungus, TB involving the Lungs, Overactive Thyroid Gland, Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, Type 1 Diabetes, Cushing's Syndrome, High Amount of Fats in the Blood, Low Amount of Albumin Proteins in the Blood, Mental Disorder with Loss of Normal Personality & Reality.

You shouldn't take Prednisone if you have: Wide-Angle Glaucoma, High Blood Pressure, Chronic Heart Failure, Heart Disease, Herpes Simplex Infection of the Eye, Herpes Simplex Infection, Inflammation of the Esophagus, Stomach Ulcer, Ulcer of the Duodenum, Ulcer from Stomach Acid, Burning Stomach, Diverticulitis, Surgical Joining of Two Parts of the Intestine, Hardening of Liver and Blockage of Bile Ducts, Kidney Disease, Osteoporosis, Infection caused by a Fungus, Active Tuberculosis, Infection, Overactive Thyroid Gland, Underactive Thyroid, Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, Type 1 Diabetes, High Amount of Fats in the Blood, Low Amount of Albumin Proteins in the Blood, Mental Disorder with Loss of Normal Personality & Reality

Never stopped them from giving it to me. If you must take Prednisone, take 4 the first day, 3 for each of the next 2 days, 2 for each of the next 3 days and finally 1 for the next 4 days. Prednisone shuts down, correct me if I'm wrong, the adrenal glands. You have to start them back up gradually. Prednisone killed Fred and Gayle took it for her rheumatoid arthritis; she's dead too. Like all drugs, it has its place and time, but should be used very carefully. Herpes simplex type-1 is the common cold sore.

Cold sores around the mouth are most often caused by the herpes simplex virus - type 1 (HSV-1 or gingivostomatitis). HSV-1 is usually transmitted from person to person by saliva or direct contact. People may have several episodes of cold sores during a lifetime, and in young children the first (primary) episode can be more bothersome. In primary HSV-1, blisters form on the lips and on the inside of the mouth, and these blisters soon develop into painful ulcers. The gums become red and swollen, and the tongue may develop a white coating. Other symptoms may include fever, muscle aches, eating difficulties, a generally ill feeling, irritability, and swollen neck glands. These symptoms may last from 3 to 14 days. After this primary episode subsides, the HSV-1 virus usually lies dormant in nearby nerves.

When the HSV-1 reactivates again, it causes classic cold sores around the mouth. The term "reactivation" means that a virus that was lying dormant (meaning it was present but not active) starts to create symptoms again. In this case, the symptoms may begin with tingling and numbness in the mouth area, followed by a blister that eventually breaks and forms a crust. Cold sores caused by reactivation of HSV-1 usually follow some type of stress, either to the mouth area alone or to the whole body, including a cold or other infection; a stressful period of life; unusually long exposure to sunlight; hormone changes in pregnancy; during menstrual periods; or after a tooth extraction.

Genital herpes is most often caused by the herpes simplex virus - type 2 (HSV-2). Occurring mainly in sexually mature adolescents or adults, HSV-2 is usually transmitted

person to person by intimate contact. Symptoms typically begin with pain, tenderness, or an itch in the genital area and occur with fever, headache, and malaise (a generally ill feeling). The thing about herpes is that once you have it, you have it, FOREVER. Herpes simplex infections can bring pain and embarrassment, but they can also cause serious health problems. HSV-1 can cause severe infections of the nervous system and is the most common agent of sporadic viral encephalitis in the United States. HSV-2 can be passed from mother to baby during childbirth and cause brain damage and life-threatening disease in the newborn.

Psychotropic drugs: Think mind-altering drugs. They include: 1) sedative-hypnotics including alcohol, barbiturates, benzodiazepines and others, 2) narcotics and narcotic antagonists, 3) psychomotor stimulants, 4) psychedelics, 5) marijuana, and 6) inhalants. Classified as to function, the drugs are: anti-psychotics, mood stabilizers, anti-anxiety agents and anti-depressants. Anti-psychotics are a different category of drug than the sedative hypnotic drugs, which include barbiturates, benzodiazepines and alcohol. The 4th category of sedative hypnotic drugs is nothing you should be taking, most of the time. It includes meprobamate (Equanil), methprylon (Noludar), glutethimide (Dorien), ethchlorvynol (Placidyl), chloral hydrate (Noctec, aka knock-out drops) and methaqualone (Quaaludes). They are prescribed occasionally except for Quaaludes. For more information, buy a copy of The Pharmmer's Almanac II.

Anti-psychotic drugs are the 'Zombie' drugs because that's what they do to you – turn you into a Zombie. The first one they came out with was Chlorpromazine (Thorazine), in 1954. They include: Thioridazine (Mellaril), Haloperidol (Haldol), Perphenazine (Triafon), Thiothixene (Navane), Trifluoperazine (Stelazine), Fluphenazine (Permitil, Proixin), Clozapine (Clozaril), Risperidone (Risperdal), Olanzapine (Zyprexa) and Quetiapine fumarate (Seroquel). Anti-psychotics have terrible side effects. It is a matter of perspective whether the disease or the cure is worse. None of this is medical advice; I'm not a doctor. All of all of the psychotropic drugs listed, only one category isn't physically addictive, the psychedelics. Psychologically additive is a different story. Remember, if the left hand doesn't get you, the right one will. The category that most people get addicted to is the benzodiazepines, like Valium, Librium and Xanax. It is also the most prescribed class of psychotropic drugs. Practice makes perfect, right doc? The last time I gave Dr J a hard time his response was, "Why do you think they call it the practice of medicine?" Drugs have indications, e.g., when you should take it and contraindications, e.g. when you shouldn't take it.

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Half a million Americans could die and more than 2 million could end up in the hospital with serious complications if an even moderately severe strain of a pandemic flu hits, a report predicted on Friday. But the United States only has 965,256 staffed hospital beds, said the report from the Trust for America's Health.

Paul Winchell, the voice of Tigger in “Winnie the Pooh” features for more than three decades and a versatile ventriloquist, who became a fixture in early children’s television along with his dummies Jerry Mahoney and Knucklehead Smiff, has died. He was 82.

WASHINGTON – Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Sunday he is bracing for even more violence in Iraq and acknowledged that the insurgency “could go on for any number of years.” Defeating the insurgency may take as long as 12 years, he said, with Iraqi security forces, not US and foreign troops, taking the lead and finishing the job.

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Can we come home when the number of dead American soldiers exceeds the number killed in Vietnam? Gee, I hope so. No, I’m no Democrat, I was just a little curious. God Bless the 22nd Amendment. I used to think that having Presidential Term Limits was a bad idea. But since 1993, I am no longer quite as certain as I once was. Life is a learning experience; so soon we get old and so late we get smart, if ever. I don’t know WHAT my excuse is.

First impressions of Mumbai (Bombay) tend to be dominated by its chronic shortage of space. Crammed onto a narrow spit of land that curls from the swamp-ridden coast into the Arabian Sea, the city has, in less than five hundred years since its “discovery” by the Portuguese, metamorphosed from an aboriginal fishing settlement into a sprawling megalopolis of over sixteen million people. I am very curious; it’s just my nature. I knew where Bombay was, the same place as it’s always been. I just didn’t know where the same place was. Can you spell tsunami? I’m just speculating, of course. I think I saw the movie; it was called *Deep Impact* or *Armageddon*.

Deep Impact had a mile-wide asteroid and *Armageddon* had an asteroid the size of Texas. In the first one, Morgan Freeman was president and in the second Stanley Anderson got the part. I like *Deep Impact* better. Given a choice between Bruce Willis and Téa Leoni, Bruce Willis loses. Her first name is pronounced “TAY-uh.” The name Téa means “goddess”. I agree; so apparently does David Duchovny (Agent Fox Mulder). Yeah, I know, but I can look. Agent Scully, Gillian Anderson isn’t hard on an old man’s eyes either. Standing at just 5’ 3”, she had to stand on an apple box to shoot many scenes in ‘The X Files’. Duchovny is 6’ ½” tall. Emily Procter is also 5’ 3” tall. She’s a blonde, Republican Sex Kitten, according to one web site.

Would you like some good news for a change? China is building its military forces faster than US intelligence and military analysts expected, prompting fears that Beijing will attack Taiwan in the next two years, according to Pentagon officials. US defense and intelligence officials say all the signs point in one troubling direction: Beijing then will be forced to go to war with the United States, which has vowed to defend Taiwan against a Chinese attack. China’s military buildup includes an array of new high-technology weapons, such as warships, submarines, missiles and a maneuverable warhead designed to defeat US missile defenses. Recent intelligence reports also show that China has stepped up military exercises involving amphibious assaults, viewed as another

sign that it is preparing for an attack on Taiwan. Asked about a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan, the official put it bluntly: "In the '07-'08 time frame, a capability will be there that a year ago we would have said was very, very unlikely. We now assess that as being very likely to be there."

China is building capabilities such as aerial refueling and airborne warning and control aircraft that can be used for regional defense and long-range power projection, Gen. Hester said. It also is developing a maneuverable re-entry vehicle, or MARV, for its nuclear warheads. The weapon is designed to counter US strategic-missile defenses, according to officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The warhead would be used on China's new DF-31 long-range missiles and its new submarine missile, the JL-2. The advances give the Chinese military "the ability ... to reach out and touch parts of the United States – Guam, Hawaii and the mainland of the United States," he said. To better deal with possible future conflicts in Asia, the Pentagon is modernizing US military facilities on the Western Pacific island of Guam and planning to move more forces there. The Air Force will regularly rotate Air Expeditionary Force units to Guam and also will station the new long-range unmanned aerial vehicle known as Global Hawk on the island, he said. It also has stationed B-2 stealth bombers on Guam temporarily and is expected to deploy B-1 bombers there, in addition to the B-52s now deployed there, Gen. Hester said.

Yep, I would like some good news, too.

China's rulers have adopted what is known as the "two-island chain" strategy of extending control over large areas of the Pacific, covering inner and outer chains of islands stretching from Japan to Indonesia. "Clearly, they are still influenced by this first and second island chain," the intelligence official said. The official said China's buildup goes beyond what would be needed to fight a war against Taiwan. The conclusion of this official is that China wants a "blue-water" navy capable of projecting power far beyond the two island chains. "If you look at the technical capabilities of the weapons platforms that they're fielding, the sea-keeping capabilities, the size, sensors and weapons fit, this capability transcends the baseline that is required to deal with a Taiwan situation militarily," the intelligence official said. "So they are positioned then, if [Taiwan is] resolved one way or the other, to really become a regional military power as well." The dispatch of a Han-class submarine late last year to waters near Guam, Taiwan and Japan was an indication of the Chinese military's drive to expand its oceangoing capabilities, the officials said. The submarine surfaced in Japanese waters, triggering an emergency deployment of Japan's naval forces. On Wednesday, one of China's largest oil producers, state-owned CNOOC Ltd., made an \$18.5 billion unsolicited offer to buy Unocal, the nation's ninth largest oil and gas company. The overture renewed concerns about foreign ownership of critical US resources – especially by China.

The other story said, for China, Taiwan is not the only issue behind the buildup of military forces. Beijing also is facing a major energy shortage that, according to one Pentagon study, could lead it to use military force to seize territory with oil and gas resources. The report produced for the Office of Net Assessment, which conducts assessments of

future threats, was made public in January and warned that China's need for oil, gas and other energy resources is driving the country toward becoming an expansionist power. China "is looking not only to build a blue-water navy to control the sea lanes [from the Middle East], but also to develop undersea mines and missile capabilities to deter the potential disruption of its energy supplies from potential threats, including the US Navy, especially in the case of a conflict with Taiwan," the report said.

The sources of that information on China comes from the Washington Times and CNN's Money Magazine. I know that I'm just being an alarmist here, but hey, prove to me that it can't happen. The mood on Capitol Hill was angry Thursday as Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan and Treasury Secretary John Snow arrived to defend the Bush administration's policy toward China. The hearing comes, as Chinese interest in buying American companies appears to be growing. Earlier this week, a top Chinese appliance maker joined in a \$1.3 billion bid for Maytag Corporation. And in April IBM completed the sale of its personal computer business to China's Lenovo Group. "There's broad discomfort in Congress about China's growing role globally and regionally and what that means for the US," said Mikkal Herberg, the director of the Asian Energy Security program at the National Bureau of Asian Research, a Seattle-based think tank.

The prospect of a CNOOC-Unocal deal "simply adds another set of concerns," said Herberg, who predicted that Unocal's US assets would be carved out of any deal. A US policy of protectionism, he said, would threaten the growth in worldwide living standards since the end of World War II. He noted too that moves by China toward a more market-driven economy have benefited the world and the United States in particular. All China needs to attack Taiwan is OIL. Beijing also has built a new tank for its large armed forces. It is known as the Type 99 and appears similar in design to Germany's Leopard 2 main battle tank. The tank is outfitted with new artillery, anti-aircraft and machine guns, advanced fire-control systems and improved engines. The country's air power is growing through the purchase of new fighters from Russia, such as Su-30 fighter-bombers, as well as the development of its own fighter jets, such as the J-10.

Why couldn't China just buy Wal-Mart? Nobody would care if that happened. The next time you go into a Wal-Mart store, just remember that the money you spend is helping China to get ready to invade Taiwan and buy up more US Corporations. (29 April 2005) Russia is to deliver the advanced 3M-54E1 (SS-N-27) anti-ship cruise missile as part of its sale of eight Kilo class diesel-electric submarines to China. US officials believe China is purchasing the weapons in preparation for countering US aircraft carrier battle groups in any future conflict over Taiwan. The Sukhoi Su-27 (NATO codename: Flanker) is the twin-engine front-line fighter aircraft designed by the Russian Sukhoi Design Bureau and manufactured by Komsomolsk-na-Amur based KnAAPO (Su-27SK) and Irkutsk-based IAPO (Su-27UBK). The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has acquired three batches of 76 Su-27 fighters from Russia since 1992. The aircraft is also built under license at Shenyang Aircraft Industry Co. (SAC) as the Jian-11 (J-11). The Flanker is the basis for the Su-30.

The Su-27 is the first PLAAF fighter aircraft capable of competing with modern Western fighters. In close 'dog fight' air combat, the Su-27 can outperform the US F-15C Eagle, a point twice demonstrated in friendly Russia-US mock air combats. The PLAAF Su-27s were first demonstrated to the public during the 1996 joint exercise to intimidate Taiwan, when China Central Television broadcasted images of PLAAF Su-27s flying in four-plane formation and attacking ground targets with unguided bombs and rockets. Later in the summer of 1999, Suixi-based Su-27s also flew round-trip missions over the Taiwan Strait during the PLA joint exercises.

Su-30 (Su-27P) is a two-seat long-range intercept fighter that first flew in December 1989, and that entered service with the Russian air forces in 1992. Largely based on the Su-27UB two-seat trainer, it has a new radiolocation system, which can transmit the positions of 10 targets to four other fighters at the same time. The so-called Su-30 series of aircraft began with the Su-27M – in effect a concept demonstrator renamed the Su-35 – the Flanker has evolved into the Su-30 multirole fighter, the Su-32/34 tactical bomber, and the Su-33 naval variant. Subtypes intended for foreign sales include the Su-30MKI (India) and the Su-30MKK (China). The Su-30 is made in Irkutsk. The Su-30s cost approximately \$34 million each – considerably more than the F-16. India, for example, has agreed to buy 40 Su-30MK two-seat fighters for \$1.2 billion. They didn't because of economic problems.

The Chinese canceled their Russian license. I didn't say they stopped building the J-11, just that they cancelled their Russian license. They have 76 Russian planes and have built more than 90 of the J-11's. It's ok, don't worry, I'm just an alarmist. 2007-2008, huh? Guess I missed it by a year, sorry. Hell, maybe I missed it by 2 years. I said Thanksgiving 2009. They'll probably buy Wal-Mart next; it will cut out the middleman and give them even more profits to spend on their military. They cut the Russians out, after all.

The wife said today that Flippin was out – she'd rather move to Sedona, Arizona. Me too. I can pack everything in about 6 hours, maybe less. I hear tell that there is an Emergency Room Doctor living in the area. I'll have to own up to having 7½ cartons of Kool's, but she'll get over it.

The Backfire D is the really good Backfire and the Tu-160 is nothing to scoff at. If the Russians start selling the Chinese Tu-160's watch out. As the most powerful combat aircraft of the Soviet Air Forces, the T-160 flies at 2,000 km/hr and can exceed the 2,000 mark with a mission-specific load. The T-160 can climb 60-70 meters per second and reach heights of up 15,000 meters. The bomber can be refueled during flight by IL-78 and ZMS-2 tanker aircraft. The air refueling system consists of a probe and drogue airborne refueling system. In early 2002 it was reported that Long-Range Aviation would soon receive three additional Tu-160 strategic bombers, being built by the Kazan aircraft plant. The first bomber funded from the 2002 state defense order was to be passed over to the military by the end of the year. After completion of the program Russia will have a fleet consisting of 18 supersonic bombers capable of using nuclear and conventional weapons. In addition, the Kazan plant will upgrade the bombers, which the Air

Force already has. The Tu-160 bombers will be equipped with upgraded avionics and long-distance cruise missiles. The upgrade program of these warplanes will cost around \$4 billion. That's right, I told you earlier that China was looking to buy some of the IL-78 tankers, didn't I?

I can't imagine why, the Backfire bombers don't have refueling probes. What's more, I'm going to be the very first person to tell you, "I told you so." Now, if the Chinese do opt for 2007-2008, we all know who the American President will be, don't we? He seems to like to shoot first and ask questions later. When the Threat Level is Red and we're at DEF-CON-3, you might want to check and see where all of our boomers and bombers are. Dimes to donuts, they won't be sitting in port. Since I'm wound up like an 8-day clock, the greatest threat to America came from a Russian Turboprop bomber called the Bear. (Tu-95) With the exception of Bear A, all models are equipped with a nose probe for aerial refueling. When you think of the Bear, think of a turboprop B-52.

And, if you see a big lineup of B-52's, they will all probably be loaded with one of the following: 20 ALCM, 12 SRAM [ext], 12 ACM [ext], 2 B53 [int], 8 B-61 Mod11 [int] or 8 B-83 [int]. The US has 44 combat-coded, an Active force of 85 plus 9 in the Reserves. Do the math. We have 94 B-52's with 20 nuclear tipped cruise missiles apiece. A modified B-52H bomber could carry twenty ALCM missiles, six under each wing and eight mounted internally on a rotary launcher. By 23 August 1986, 98 B-52G aircraft had completed the cruise missile modification program. Boeing completed production of the 1,715th and last ALCM on 7 October 1986.

The W80, designed by Los Alamos, is deployed in air-launched and sea-launched cruise missiles. Approximately 350 nuclear SLCMs were produced, and all remain in storage. NRDC estimates that a total of 400 W80s are currently deployed to arm ACMs. NRDC also estimates that the W80-1 stockpile includes a total of 1,400 warheads remain in stockpile associated with the 900 ALCMs that are in storage with their warheads removed.

A nuclear weapon system consists of a delivery vehicle, a nuclear warhead, and those components (facilities, support equipment, procedures, and personnel) required for its operation. The surface launched Tomahawk Land Attack Missile-Nuclear (TLAM-N) weapon system on board a ship includes a BGM-109A-I cruise missile with a W80-0 nuclear warhead, deck mounted armored box launchers, a weapon control system, and a mission planning system. You tell me what the truth is.

Bankrupt – Chapter 13

Let's return to the subject of drugs, one last time. Some have a very definite shelf life, generally one year. Epinephrine is a drug with a definite shelf life of one year. Others are the antibiotics, again, one year. 25 years ago Keflex was the hot broad-spectrum oral antibiotic, generally taken in 250mg or 500mg capsules with a regimen of treatment of QID for ten days. Sometimes 7 days. It was the basis for a whole group of antibiotics. In the IV form of Keflex is Keflin. This medication is a cephalosporin-type antibiotic used to treat a wide variety of bacterial infections (e.g., skin, bone and genitourinary tract infections). Continue to use this medication until the full-prescribed time is finished even if symptoms disappear after a few days. Stopping the medication too early may allow bacteria to continue to grow resulting in a relapse of the infection.

Cipro hit the news with the anthrax scare. Cipro is expensive. This medication is used to treat a variety of bacterial infections. Ciprofloxacin belongs to a class of drugs called quinolone antibiotics. It works by stopping the growth of bacteria. This antibiotic only treats bacterial infections. It will not work for viral infections (e.g., common cold, flu). Unnecessary use or overuse of any antibiotic can lead to its decreased effectiveness. The IV form is Ciprofloxacin – intravenous. Doxycycline is now the favored treatment for anthrax.

Many newer antibiotics come in a blister pack containing 6 or 7 pills. You generally take 2 pills the first day and 1 a day until gone. Antibiotics for strep throat include: Amoxil, Augmentin, Zithromax, Biaxin, Duricef, Keflex, Keftab, Spectracef, Ketek. Drug for pneumonia include: Ceclor, Duricef, Suprax, Cedax, Ceftin, Keflex, Lorabid. Other antibiotic for urinary tract infections include: Amoxil, Trimox, Wymox, Augmentin, Omnipen, Polycillin, Ceclor, Suprax, Vantin, Rocephin.

Two new antibiotics – called telithromycin and Zyvox – have been approved by the FDA in recent months and are targeted at killing some drug-resistant supergerms as well as standard infections like pneumonia, chronic bronchitis, sinus infections, and strep throat. Zyvox also has been FDA approved for the treatment of “superinfections” and should be “saved only for situations when there is no other choice,” according to the FDA. An antibiotic called Synercid (approved in 1999) and others remain the first line of defense, according to the FDA. Antibiotics for middle ear infection include: Amoxil, Trimox, Wymox, Augmentin, Vantin, Rocephin, Ceftin, Bactrim, Cotrim, Septra.

Remember when it was simple? We had Sulfa drugs and Penicillin. Now we have:

Aminoglycosides: Amikacin, Gentamicin, Kanamycin, Neomycin, Netilmicin, Paromomycin, Streptomycin, Tobramycin.

Beta-lactam antibiotics: Clavulanic acid, Cephalosporins, Imipenem, Penicillins, Sulbactam.

Cephalosporins: Aztreonam, Cefaclor, Cefadroxil, Cefadroxil, Cefamandole, Cefazolin, Cefdinir, Cefepime, Cefixime, Cefoperazone, Cefotaxime, Cefotetan, Cefoxitin, Cefpodoxime, Cefprozil, Ceftibuten, Ceftizoxime, Ceftriaxone, Cefuroxime, Cephalexin. Cephapirin, Cephadrine, Imipenem and Cilastatin, Loracarbef, Meropenem.

Macrolides: Azithromycin, Clarithromycin, Dirithromycin, Erythromycin, Troleandomycin

Penicillins: Axocicillin, Amoxicillin and Clavulanate, Ampicillin, Ampicillin and sulbatam, Bacampicillin, Carbenicillin, Cloxacillin, Dicloxacillin, Mezlocillin, Nafcillin, Oxacillin, Penicillin G, Penicillin V, Piperacillin, Piperacillin and Tazobactam, Ticarcillin, Ticarcillin and Clavulanate

Quinolones: Cinoxacin, Ciprofloxacin, Enoxacin, Gatifloxacin, Levofloxacin, Lomefloxacin, Moxifloxacin, Nalidixic Acid, Norfloxacin, Ofloxacin, Sparfloxacin, Trovafloxacin and Altrofloxacin

Sulfonamides: Silver sulfadiazine, Sodium sulfacetamide, Sulfanilamide, Sulfasalazine, Sulfisoxazole, Trimethoprim and Sulfamethoxazole, Triple Sufla

Tetracyclines: Demeclocycline, Doxycycline, Minocycline, Oxytetracycline, Tetracycline all of which have a one year shelflife.

Miscellaneous antibiotics: Bacitracin, Chloramphenicol, Chlorhexidine, Colistimethate, Dapsone, Furazolidone, Lincomycin, Linezolid, Nitrofurantoin, Oral and Typical Clindamycin, Trimethoprim, Vancomycin

My son the Doctor, he's charges a lot of money because he knows how to pronounce all of those names. He not only knows the Brand names, he knows all of the generic names. Take a handful of aspirin and call me if you survive. The standbys are Amoxicillin, Keflex, Erythromycin and Tetracycline and you still have to know which one to take for what. They call it the practice of medicine because doctors spend a lot of time practicing how to pronounce the names. There is something on the order of 7,000 prescription drugs. I can't be a doctor because I get a migraine just looking at the names of the antibiotics. Enough already, I promise. Back to the end of the world.

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I certainly hope those Chinese can learn how to make Chop Suey, it's an American 'Chinese' dish. The Chinese come to America to go to Chinese restaurants and eat American food. Most of us don't eat real Chinese food. But maybe we'll have to learn. They're using slave labor to manufacture goods for use to sell in Wal-Mart. They take the money they get from that and pirated American software and are buying up their military hardware. I wouldn't put it past the Russians to sell them Tu-160's.

But, in this instance, it didn't do them any good. They didn't even get to go to Taiwan on vacation. One little mistake, resorting to a nuclear option; the weapons are bigger, but we have more. We could both hit what we aimed at and the president knew it. That's probably why he emptied out the silos. We still had 14 SSBN's and our bomber fleet. Those SSBN's don't carry a lot of food; I wonder where they put in to port? Probably anywhere they could get beans and rice. On second thought, I don't think they got beans, not for a submarine.

We had plenty of beans at Ft. Mayer. Maybe too many, but I could live on chili as long as I can get something for my stomach. Beans are a starchy product that is rich in vegetable protein. You add tomatoes and onions for the vegetables and a little ground beef and you have a complete meal in a bowl. You add a couple of slices of home baked bread slathered in some home churned butter and you're set. For something different, you boil some rice and make the chili a little thicker, nothing to it. You can vary the amount of chili powder according to people's tastes. It might get a little old, but it's a reasonably balanced diet. You can always grate a little of your homemade cheese on top for a different flavor.

The pioneers got by that way, didn't they? Why do I love single action firearms? They are much simpler than some of the modern firearms. They might be a little slower to reload, unless you're a movie cowboy with a 44 shot revolver, but there isn't much to break. They generally use the bigger cartridges, too, like the .45 Colt. I can just visualize someone taking 2-3 rounds from a .45 and still being on his feet. Not really, I can't.

The word must have gotten out about Ft. Mayer; we didn't have any more visitors for quite some time. It wasn't like we were on a main road or anything. With the above ground underground we were also using much less wood for heat. Most of the time the homes were comfortable just the way they were, especially in the summer. We survived, what more is there?

Bankrupt – Epilogue

Ron, Clarence and I lived until we died. Everybody dies, eventually; it's just your final act of life. Did the country ever pull itself together? We weren't kicked back into the Stone Age, if that's what you're asking. We slowly put it all back together. The background radiation was always higher after the war than before. We improvised, adapted and overcame.

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